

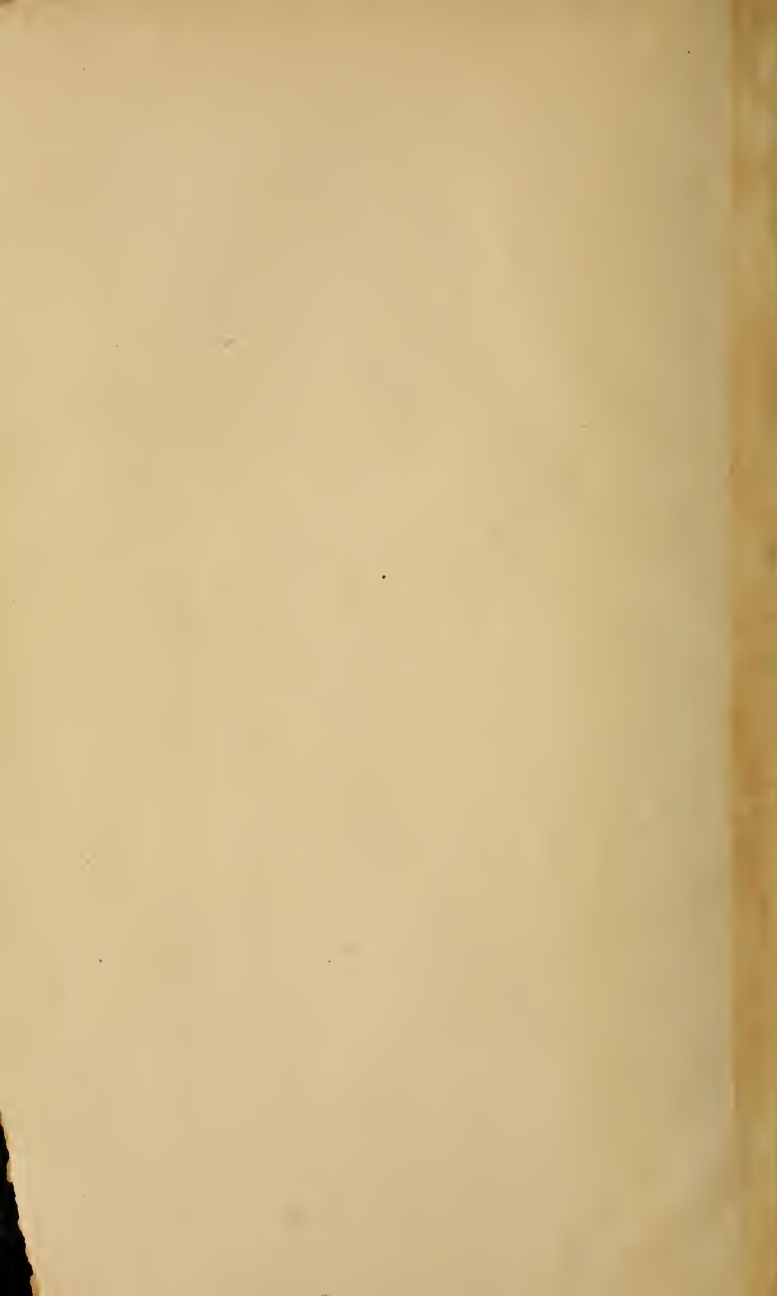


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DISCUSSION

BEFORE THE

Joint. Committee on Studies, &c.,

OF THE

19090  
New York (city).  
BOARD OF EDUCATION,

*(Appointed February 19th, 1868,)*

IN REFERENCE TO MODIFICATIONS OF THE

COURSE OF STUDIES, &c.

1868.

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The Joint Committee appointed pursuant to the accompanying preamble and resolution adopted at the stated session of the Board of Education held on the nineteenth day of February last, met at the Hall of the Board of Education, on Monday, the twenty-seventh day of April, 1868, at five o'clock, P. M.:

19090  
*Whereas*, Complaint has frequently been made by parents of children that attend the Public Schools, and by many others interested in public education in this city, that the Course of Studies pursued in the Schools, the number of studies, the rules governing their acquisition and teaching, and time required for their completion, are too arduous and cause serious injury to the physical and mental energies of both teachers and pupils, therefore—

*Resolved*, That the Committees on Course of Studies, and Teachers, be, and they hereby are appointed a Joint Committee to consider the subject mentioned in the preamble herein; and that said Joint Committee be, and it hereby is directed to request the Superintendent of Schools, his Assistants, the Clerk of this Board, and such Principals, Assistant Teachers, and other parties as it may deem advisable, to appear before it, to the end that all available information on the subject may be obtained, particularly as to the amount of labor performed by the Teachers, and time devoted to study by the pupils, and that said Joint Committee report its conclusions to this Board at its earliest convenience, together with the evidence taken before it, and the views expressed by the Superintendent of Schools, Principals and other parties, so that this Board may be aided in coming to a just and proper decision on the subject.

*Present*—Commissioners Merrill, (*Chairman*,) Dupignac, Hall, Neilson, West, Duryea, Warren and Euring.

The CHAIRMAN directed the Clerk to read the following resolution which had been adopted by the Committee.

“*Resolved*, That the Principals of Male Grammar Schools, Female Grammar Schools, and Primary Schools, the Male Vice-Principals, Male Assistants, and the Female Assistants in the respective departments, be requested to respectively select not more than two competent persons, from or for each class above mentioned, to represent them and present their views orally, on

the resolutions pending before this Committee, on the twenty-seventh day of April, 1868, at five o'clock, P. M., in the large room of the Hall of the Board of Education; and that the remarks and debates on that occasion be reported in full for the use of the Committee and for future reference; and that the parties mentioned in this resolution, and the City Superintendent of Schools and his Assistants, be notified of the passage of this resolution."

The Chairman then announced that the following persons had been appointed delegates to represent the several classes of teachers mentioned in the foregoing resolution:

DAVID B. SCOTT, of G. S. 40,

THOMAS HUNTER, of G. S. 55,

*Representing Principals of the Male Grammar Schools.*

Miss MARY A. SIMMS, of G. S. 11,

Miss MARGARET M'COSKER, of G. S. 24,

*Representing Principals of the Female Grammar Schools.*

Mrs. MARY E. McCLOSKEY, of G. S. 17, Primary Department,

Miss ABBY N. BEALE, of G. S. 11, " "

*Representing Principals of the Primary Schools.*

WM. J. KENNARD, of G. S. 16,

HUGH CARLISLE, of G. S. 48,

*Representing the Male Vice Principals.*

Miss ELIZA WOODS, of G. S. No. 33,

*Representing the Vice-Principals of the Female G. S.*

FRED. W. JAMES, of G. S. 17,

HENRY T. CARROLL, of G. S. 1,

*Representing the Male Assistant Teachers.*

Miss ROSINA G. HARTMAN, of G. S. 14,

Miss VIRGINIA BLAKE, of G. S. 55,

*Representing the Female Assistants in Male Gram. Schools.*

Miss ELIZABETH LOVERIDGE, of G. S. 11,

Miss GERTRUDE SIMPSON, of G. S. 14,

*Representing the Assistants in Female Grammar Schools.*

Miss GUILIETTA R. KIERSTED, of G. S. 32, Primary Dept.,

Miss LIZZIE A. PARDEE, of G. S. 55, " "

*Representing the Vice-Principals of the Primary D. & S.*



Mrs. EMMA M. VANDERBILT, of G. S. 35, Primary Department,  
Mrs. JANE E. SIMMS, of G. S. 48, " "  
*Representing the Assistants in Primary Depts. & Schools.*

At the request of the Chairman, Mr. DAVID B. SCOTT, Principal of Grammar School No. 40, then addressed the Committee:

Mr. Chairman, and Gentlemen of the Committee: When the circular of your committee, dated April 2, 1868, reached the Principals of the Schools, the Male Principals' Association had already begun an inquiry into the defects of the present course of studies, and I believe it was the purpose of the Association to have recommended to the Board of Education, after due and deliberate consultation, very considerable changes in that course.

The arrival of your circular changed the direction of these consultations of the Principals. It became at once evident, that whatever objections there lay against the course of studies must take the form of general points rather than a minute analysis of its defects.

It was evident, also, that these objections must have a bearing and throw light on that which was the main object of the Committee's inquiry—the pressure on the physical and mental energies of teachers and pupils. The Association, therefore, with marked unanimity, passed the following resolutions, which my associate and myself were delegated to present and enforce before your Committee :

*Resolved*, That it is the sense of this Association that too much work is demanded by the Board of Education from teachers and pupils.

*Resolved*, That, in the Annual Examinations of the Schools, no teacher should be held responsible for a lower grade, and that the word "reviews" or "reviewed" be stricken out of the course of studies whenever it is used in connection with studies the advance work in which is readily separated from that which precedes it—as, for example, in Geography, History, Oral Instruction, etc.

*Resolved*, That as the term "outlines" is very indefinite, and a fruitful source of anxiety, it ought also to be stricken out, and that the extent of study required from teachers and pupils should be indicated and limited with precision.

*Resolved*, That the whole course of study should be so modified and arranged that the great strain now exerted on the mental and physical energies of teachers and pupils should be removed.

*Resolved*, That, in the opinion of the Association, the strain on the health of class teachers is greatly increased by the fear of the annual examinations, and the marking of the results by the Superintendents ; and that the strain is felt in some degree by the pupils, in the extra drill and repetitions made necessary by this preparation.

The first and fourth resolutions really are one, at least they might have been readily put in one, and I shall take the liberty of reading them combined, in this way :

*Resolved*, That it is the sense of this Association that too much work is demanded by the Board of Education from teachers and pupils, and that the whole course of study should be so modified and arranged that the great strain now exerted on the mental and physical energies of both should be removed.

The male Principals in this resolution thus answer the inquiry of the Board of Education in the affirmative. They believe that there is a great strain now exerted on the mental and physical energies of teachers and pupils.

Mr. Chairman, I now ask your attention to the consideration of the grounds on which that opinion is based, especially with reference to the teachers of the Male Grammar Schools.

And first, Mr. Chairman, they find that a very fruitful source of anxiety, and needlessly hard work, lies in the indeterminate way the work to be performed by the teacher is laid out in the course of study, particularly where it is indicated by the word "outlines."

Thus we have "outlines" in History, "outlines" in Geography, "outlines" in Oral Instruction," etc. In order to call your attention to this subject more clearly, I will refer your attention to the course of studies as prescribed by the Manual. In the seventh grade of the regular course, we have "Primary Geography, including the general outlines;" in the sixth grade, we find "Geography—outlines of North America, including the United States and West Indies;" in the fifth grade, again, we have "Geography—outlines of South America and Europe, to include a general description of the countries;" in the fourth

grade, we are given "Geography—outlines of Asia, Africa and Oceanica; in the third grade, we find "History—the outlines of Colonial History to 1753; in the second grade, also, History of the United States, from 1753 to 1789; the outlines only of the Revolutionary War to be taught.

In the matter of "oral instruction," a subject which I am glad to see introduced in all the grades save the first, I must say that I am sorry to see that it also has been required as "outlines."

Now, Mr. Chairman, what are the "outlines of any branch of study?" Hardly any two persons agree thereon. One is satisfied with the merest skeleton of the subject; another would add a little more. This produces great uncertainty in the minds of teachers as to the ground likely to be required. This uncertainty again causes anxiety, and this anxiety compels the teacher to go over a great deal of very unnecessary work.

Take geography, for example, as an instance of this uncertainty. What are the outlines of the United States? "Outlines! outlines!" I hear some one say. "Why, outlines of the United States are easily enough given." Let us hear what they are? "Why, of course, there are the boundaries, then the principal mountains." What, in your opinion, are the principal mountain ranges? "Oh, the Alleghany and the Rocky Mountains, to be sure." Not the Blue Ridge? "Well, yes; perhaps the Blue Ridge." Not the Green Mountains? "Why, yes; and the Green Mountains." Shall we not give the White Mountains, that we hear of every summer? "Why, to be sure; we had better have the White Mountains." So we have already raised our friend's idea of outline mountains from two to five.

If we pass to rivers, to be given in the outlines, the perplexity is equally if not more apparent.

What rivers shall we have, we ask our confident friend? "The Mississippi, and Ohio, and St. Lawrence, and, perhaps, the Missouri." Yes, but here is the Niagara, a boundary river, and that ought to be known by young children—and the Hudson. "Certainly," says he, "we must add these." What of the Potomac, a national river? "Yes, add the Potomac, surely." And some of the great rivers of the Lower Mississippi Valley the Red, the Arkansas, the Tennessee? "Why, yes, we ought

to have some, or all these." Well, but there is the Rio Grande in the south; the Colorado in the southwest; and the Columbia in the northwest. "Yes, on second thoughts, better add these." And so we increase our catalogue of rivers.

It is vastly worse with towns or cities. Do outlines demand capitals of States only, or chief cities in addition? If chief cities, what are the chief cities, and how many? Who is to determine for the anxious teacher? The books themselves differ greatly, and there is no help from them.

Now, Mr. Chairman, this really serious anxiety is not to be removed by the remark that "it is easy enough to tell what outlines are." The principals beg leave to say, that it is so far from easy to tell what an examiner may consider outlines, that they call it very difficult, and they very earnestly desire that this should be remedied. It seems to them that there is a remedy. The attempt to meet this has been already made successful in more than one city, and these attempts demonstrate that it is possible to fix, with reasonable precision, the ground of each study, in the lower grades in particular, (for there is the chief difficulty,) so that the work of the teacher becomes, in a great degree, clear and determinate. Allow me to enforce what has been already said on the necessity of clearly defining the work of the teacher, by calling your attention to that portion of the course of studies which says, under the head of Spelling—Seventh Grade—"words from the reading book, with miscellaneous words." The words required from the reading book are right and proper, but what are "miscellaneous words?" Into what a sea of uncertainty we sail when we launch our boat into the ocean of miscellaneous words. And yet these miscellaneous words are found added to spelling in the lowest grade. Are they to be words of one syllable or two syllables, or polysyllables as well? Are they to be drawn from the home, or the street, or business, or from all these? Shall they be a little miscellaneous, or greatly so?

Five hundred words; if that seems too few, well, then, a thousand, fifteen hundred, two thousand words in common use, and from common life could be judiciously selected and arranged, and furnished to the teachers of the fifth, sixth and seventh grades, and their minds thus set at rest.



Impressed most powerfully with the justice of these views, the Male Principals have resolved "that as the term outlines is very indefinite, and a fruitful source of anxiety, it ought to be stricken out wherever it appears in the course of study, and that the ground of study required from teacher and pupil should be indicated, and limited with precision."

Another fruitful source of overwork and anxiety arises from the teachers being held responsible for the studies of lower or previous grades. The Superintendent, in his examinations, requires the teachers to keep up constant reviews of preceding grades, in addition to the work of the grades proper to the class they are instructing. To prove that we do not mistake the point, I quote from the Superintendent's circular, September, 1866. Towards the beginning he says, first: "Classes will be visited for the purpose of examination and review, at the discretion of the Superintendent. Such examinations and reviews will embrace the studies pursued by the respective classes. At the commencement of the examinations the teacher will be required to furnish a statement of the studies pursued during the period the class has been in his or her charge (stating such period), with the progress made in each, *and the studies in which the class has been reviewed.*" And again at another place he says: "The attention of teachers is again specially directed to the paramount importance of *thorough instruction* within the grades of their respective classes, and of *frequent and searching reviews of the ground previously gone over.*"

The Male Principals, with great unanimity, respectfully object to this requirement of the Superintendent and of the course of studies.

In a study like arithmetic, for example, which is really made up at every step of an application of the four simple rules—addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division—review, in a modified sense, becomes an element of each step; but in studies like geography and history the case is very different. What propriety can there be in requiring a teacher, whose ground, for instance, is Europe, to be responsible for reviews of the United States, South America, and the Dominion of Canada? or, if the Colonial History has been completed in the class below, why must it be ever present by review, while the mind

of the child is laboring to grasp the story of the Revolution? No one will, I think, contend that the geography of Europe may not be studied intelligently and thoroughly mastered, without the map of North America being ever present as a review, or that the study of the Revolution may not be well learned topically by a child, without much more than a passing allusion to the French and Indian War.

There is really something very perplexing and harassing, Mr. Chairman, in being held responsible for these reviews. Shall children not be permitted to forget some of the things that are behind and press forward to those that are before? May not certain subjects be laid aside as they advance? Must one have always before him the scaffolding that has assisted in the erection of the building? Surely there comes a time when, having served its purpose, it may be put away, to serve again elsewhere as it may be needed. Do we undervalue all reviews? Certainly not. We can scarcely suppose that there is any judicious teacher who does. But the Male Principals feel that these reviews ought to be confined, in nearly every study, to the advanced ground covered by the grade. They say, let there be real progress, and make that progress thorough by review—the more thorough the better. But if our teachers are to keep going back, forgetting nothing and learning little, which result the course of study does not intend, it would end very much as a great thinker described the preaching of a celebrated Englishman: “It is like a door on its hinges,” said he, “constant motion, but no progress.” Or if they are to be allowed to forget nothing, and at the same time learn a proper amount, then that can only end in one way—the destruction of that elastic spring of progress, a lively interest in the studies pursued, by sapping the mental energies of teachers and pupils. Still further, we do not find such continued and extensive reviews required in the course of study arranged by higher institutions. For in these the limits of study in each part of the course are distinctly marked. The work for one year being finished, a new year and a new work begins: the old work is not carried over. As matters now stand with us in New York, some of us fancy that every class-room might very suitably be decorated with a bust

of Janus, facing both ways—one face to the grade that has passed, and the other to that which is to come.

The Principals have therefore directed us to press on your attention this resolution :

*Resolved*, That in the annual examinations of the Schools, no teacher should be held responsible for the instruction in a lower grade, and that the word “review,” or “reviewed,” be stricken out whenever it is used in connection with studies, the advanced work in which can be readily separated from that which precedes it—as for example, in geography, history, oral instruction, etc.

So much, Mr. Chairman, I have presented under the authority of my fellow Principals, and with their unanimous assent. May I be pardoned if I now add an objection to the course of studies, an objection shared with me by my associate delegate, as well as by other principals to the subject of Grammar, as laid down in the “Course of Studies,” and as affecting the mental energies of teacher and pupil. The present course carries grammar down into the Fifth grade, one grade below where it was formerly, amongst young boys whose average age in my own School is scarcely more than ten or eleven years. So far as the correction of vulgar errors of speech is concerned, that is well enough, and might very properly be begun in the Primary Department. Technically, or in a schoolmaster way, that is not what is meant by grammar, as a branch of study, although it is made a part of the grammar course in the Fifth grade. I deem the introduction of oral teaching, in this branch, a very decided improvement, but I sincerely regret that it is not begun in a higher grade, where the pupils are more mature. For grammar is peculiarly a critical study, demanding an acuteness of mind that is seldom obtained among young children. Besides, the definitions and rules are very abstruse, and boys are quite incapable of understanding the minute and exceedingly abstract distinctions of the books when they begin to use them, or even when they are considerably advanced. To add to the inherent perplexity of the subject, grammar is one of those things that are very indeterminate when we come to arrange a grade. Thus, in the Fourth grade, the teacher is responsible for the analysis and construction of simple sentences. What are simple sentences ?

Simple, of course, is a term technical to grammar. Simple sentences form, in many cases, the most perplexing sentences in the language. It is hardly possible to pass beyond the simplest combination of six or eight words without adding phrases, and phrases very soon assume most puzzling shapes. Then commences the worrying anxiety of the teacher. Perhaps the Superintendent will give such a sort of a sentence, or such another: and then the variety is almost infinite. Again in the second grade, we have "easy complex and compound sentences." Of course, as the grade below covered simple sentences, the teacher must keep up this also. What are *easy* complex and compound sentences? It is quite possible that there may be great difference of opinion about that word "easy," and here again begins 'the teacher's worry. Of all the subjects taught in our schools, I think, Mr. Chairman, there is no one so fruitful of anxiety to the teacher as the study of grammar, and simply because there is no telling what may be the views of the examiner as to the sentences he gives.

And then, sir, after years of bother with the younger pupils, I am tempted to enquire, What is it all worth? My sincere opinion to-day is, that if grammar were stricken out of every grade below the Second, it would be an immense gain to the pupils and teachers. I would leave its study to maturer minds, for if ever there was a branch of learning that seemed to be especially devised and used to worry the minds of very young children with, to them, incomprehensible technicalities and subtle definitions, that subject is grammar. These views are, with me, old and well settled. I am told that there can be pointed out, here and there, throughout the schools, particularly in the Female Departments, teachers of marked originality in the department of grammar, who have accomplished noticeable results in this direction, and with comparatively immature minds under their care. But I submit, that the subject cannot be taught generally by persons of marked originality; that it must be taught by competent persons of reasonable attainments, and that after an acquaintance of twenty-five years with the schools I have seen no such results among young boys, but very much the opposite.

Still further, Mr. Chairman, I have talked repeatedly with



several principals, vice-principals and first assistants, on the study of grammar in upper grades, and I find them all concurring in this:—that of all the branches they are required to teach, there is none in which they so soon find themselves utterly at sea, without port or compass, as in grammar. “We never know,” say they, “what are the limits of the requirements.”

In addition to these objections, the male principals suggest that the studies of the First Grade might very properly be rearranged. They were generally in favor of recommending that descriptive and topographical geography should be finished in the Second Grade, leaving physical geography only to be pursued in the First Grade, and they were unanimous in the opinion that book-keeping and algebra ought to be introduced into the First Grade, and that astronomy should be transferred from the First to the Supplementary Grades. These, I may safely say, unanimous views, did not take the form of a resolution, because it was thought best, at a subsequent meeting, to limit the resolutions to the points embraced in the inquiry of the Board of Education. But since that meeting I have been earnestly requested by several principals, whose opinion I cannot permit myself to disregard, to present these points to the notice of your Committee, and also the following:—They were unanimous in feeling that the studies of the First Grade as now arranged, will prove most injurious to the smaller schools, because by throwing out algebra and book-keeping from this grade, as it was in former years, they cannot prepare pupils for the New York College. The boys who would otherwise remain with them will seek the larger schools, where there are classes in Supplementary Grades, and the current once diverted from their schools will not readily return to them. There is much force in this objection. These schools are many of them in localities where they cannot form supplementary classes, but they have always a few boys who are desirous of entering the College. Let it once be felt that boys cannot be fitted in these schools, then, not only will the pupils who desire this preparation leave them, but the schools themselves must suffer in public estimation.

Having now stated in general terms, the leading objections

to the present course of study, you will naturally expect us to answer categorically the question—Do you believe that the physical energies of pupils are overtasked? We naturally answer for the male grammar schools and for these alone.

So far as my own experience and energies enable me to answer, I very freely reply that I do not think they are. And so far from parents thinking their boys overtaxed by excessive study, I beg leave to state that the constant complaint in my own school, as well as others, is that they have not enough to do. So far from asking that the amount of home work should be reduced in the lower grades, there are many principals who think it might be judiciously increased.

Do you ask, Mr. Chairman, if we deem the present First Grade too arduous for the pupils? So far as my enquiries extend I am authorized to answer that without the change recommended, even as it at present stands—always excepting reviews—it is a grade by no means overtasking. There are certain studies that we deem would be better accomplished by maturer hands, but their place we would supply, as has been already stated.

The truth is, that a good deal depends on the judgment of the teacher, in the lessons he or she assigns to be learned. I think, for instance, that earnest, enthusiastic and anxious teachers are very apt to find themselves putting their First and even their Second grade boys to a pace that is very likely to carry the lads off their feet. And the more anxious and enthusiastic the teacher, the greater is the danger. I have known of considerable surprise being manifested when the attention of such men has been called to a close analysis of the amount of time required for home study in each of the lessons given out. A little analysis of this sort does both principal and teacher a great deal of good.

Allow me at this point to call your attention to two things, that have some bearing on the question before your Committee.

*First.*—The bad ventilation of the class rooms. It is a very sad thing to feel that the absence of any scientific means of thorough ventilation is a standing rebuke to the (present state) of architecture. If it were only the school-houses that were

deficient, then the remedy might be plain ; but it is equally so with all public buildings.

*Second.*—The crowded condition of the classes. If it be true that sixty, seventy and seventy-five children are sometimes to be found in class in a Grammar School, (and I am told there are often more in some of our Primaries,) I think we can readily perceive one way by which our teachers may be overworked. The accomplishment of any decent grade of study with such numbers becomes well nigh impossible. For overworking from this cause the “Course of Studies” is not responsible. The disciplining of classes so large is itself one of the most wearing things. The irritations and perplexities and annoyances, increasing from morning until three o’clock, are very painful to be endured, and the saddest thing is that these very heavy duties are to be gone through with by many of our youngest teacher.

It now remains for me, Mr. Chairman, to present and explain the following resolution :

*Resolved*, that in the opinion of this association the strain on the health of class teachers is greatly increased by the fear of the annual examinations, and the marking of the results by the Superintendent ; and that this strain is felt in some degree by the pupils, in the extra drill and repetitions made necessary by the preparation.

Mr. Chairman, I approach this part of the discussion with great modesty. I am well aware of the difference of opinion among the various members of my profession on the benefits of a marking system. But, sir, the principals felt, I may say almost unanimously felt, and my associate delegate and myself felt, that any statement of causes affecting the health of the teachers mentally and physically, would be incomplete if it left out what is a well understood source of painful and wearing anxiety, The Annual Examination Marks.

Your Committee desire to know the influences connected with the course of studies which work injuriously on the healthful energies of the teachers. This the principals know to be one and not the least, and they have authorized my associate and myself to lay it before you.

When a course of study has been prepared and furnished to the teachers, there must be some one to see that the work laid down in it is executed. For this duty we have first, the Principals constantly overseeing their respective schools. Next we have the Superintendent, visiting all the schools in his annual examination. To indicate with clearness his opinion of the results he then finds, he has adopted a system of marking by percentage, varying all the way from 100 per cent., the maximum—downwards. Upon these marks the reputation of the teachers, so far as the different Boards of Trustees are concerned, is made very much to depend. Strictly speaking, the whole course of study points steadily to this examination by the Superintendent. All the anxiety about outlines and reviews on the part of the teachers arises chiefly from this. This anxiety wears on them for weeks previous to the examination. As an experienced teacher, now a principal, expressed herself, “it made the world “literally a blank for weeks each year; and when it was over “she felt as though she were relieved of a crushing weight.”

At such times it is to little or no purpose that the principals try to assure their teachers that they are satisfied with their work. It is impossible to remove the anxiety about the Superintendent's marks. It remains there, and continues to remain until the examination is passed; and, if that is unsuccessful, it is not then removed. I am well aware that the Superintendent has assured them in his annual notices to the schools, that much of this anxiety is unnecessary. But still “the arrow remains fixed in the side.”

In the light of the inquiry in the hands of your Committee, I have re read these annual fall circulars of the Superintendent to the principals and teachers in relation to these examinations; and my attention has been called to a recent article over his signature in one of the daily papers, in which article the same views are still further enforced.

Mr. Chairman, I feel well assured—we all feel assured, that the Superintendent desires the welfare of the teachers and the pupils; and the communication to which I allude breathes nothing but a well meant and kind regard for them, and an anxiety to remedy any reasonable ground of complaint, coupled with surprise that he has been misunderstood.

But I say, with great respect to that gentleman, that somehow or other he has been unfortunate in not giving the comfort I am sure he meant to give.

The point of encouragement on which he lays stress, is found in the circular of 1866, as follows :

“The knowledge thus imparted, however long the time occupied in its acquisition, will be infinitely more valuable to the pupil than any superficial show of scholarship resting merely on memory, however rapid may be the grade of advancement thus secured. ‘Not how much but how well’ should be the permanent motto of every class, every teacher, and every pupil of our Public Schools. Not how advanced the grade of the class, *but how thorough the scholarship, in whatever grade the class may be.* Not how many pages of the text book may have been gone over, or how much may be glibly recited from memory, but *how much* has been completely mastered, clearly understood, and perfectly assimilated by the intellect, so that it may be at any time intelligently reproduced, and rendered capable of practical application.”

In relation to this extract I now offer the following points :

While there is a grade—and every class is in some grade—and a special time is allotted to the reasonable completion of that grade, every teacher supposes that at the end of that time he or she will be held responsible for the same.

The Grades, with the exception of the First and Supplementary, are arranged so that the advanced work may be gone over during the half of each school year—say, five months.

Two months’ work in a grade would naturally mean two-fifths of that grade, and so on.

Now, does the Superintendent mean that if a class has had four months instruction in the grade, he would accept at the examination what might only be fairly considered as one or two months’ work by a competent instructor ; and that he would give for thoroughness in that amount of work without reference to the time, the same mark that he would have given had the amount of ground corresponded to the time.

If he does so, then my fellow principals have very much misunderstood him. If he does so, ought he to do so ; and is not the system of marking on such a basis open to grave objections ?



We believe that the amount of work mastered ought to correspond to the time spent on it. And the principals have always supposed that one of the most important duties of their position was to see that this was methodically and thoroughly accomplished by their assistants.

We believe that in all the grades, with the exception of those already mentioned, the time allotted for their completion is sufficient for attentive, regular, and studious pupils to master with reasonable thoroughness the ground laid down. And we think that there would be good grounds to doubt the competency of a teacher who was unable to accomplish more than one-third or one-half of it in the time, excepting always, of course, the matter of reviews.

In reference to the fear of these marks, I think I have noticed this, that the poorest teachers are not those who suffer most from anxiety in regard to them; but that some of the best and most earnest teachers, well assured in their positions by tried and faithful service, as I should say, and not afraid by any means that they will get such a mark as to endanger their situations, are painfully nervous that A or B in the same school will get some trifling two or three per cent. more than themselves. In many such cases I am afraid that the children are also driven by the anxiety of the teacher; and the more earnest the teacher at such a time, the worse I fear for the children.

Perhaps no system of examination, however wise, would entirely do away with the anxiety on the part of the teacher who is earnest and high-spirited. But there are a good many causes constantly at work, and quite independent of any efforts on the part of the teachers, that make the present system of marking a source of uncertainty and anxiety. I mention only a few of the causes when I allude—

To certain studies, the results in which no examiner can determine or fix by differences of two or three, or four or five per cent., or indeed, truly, by any per cent.

To the varying sizes of classes, from sixty to thirty pupils, a regard to which cannot enter into a mathematically exact system.

To the differences in neighborhood, and consequent home in-



fluence, opportunities, and intelligence of the pupils of different schools, and some classes of the same schools.

To irregular attendance, unavoidable in some localities, and breaking in upon the regular instruction of the teacher, doubling and trebling the class work.

To that which strikes us so forcibly—the impossibility of giving two classes identically the same oral examination, unless with precisely the same questions, put in the same way, and the consequent impossibility of absolutely correct comparison.

And finally, to the feeling shared by many of our oldest and most experienced Principals, that these marks, so far from being, in many studies, mathematically correct, are at best only approximations and impressions, unmodified by the points already given.

But the length of time I have already occupied your attention warns me that I cannot enlarge upon these points. Besides, sir, my associate will follow me. I am more than content to leave the further enforcement of these resolutions to his ability and experience. A few more words and I have done.

It has been charged upon the Principals, that while many of them were ready enough to point out the defects of the present marking system, they had no substitute to offer.

I am not sure that this is a fair way to put the question against the Principals. A good deal is gained, Mr. Chairman, when the defects of a system are pointed out, and it may not always be the business of those, who are asked to point them out, to indicate the remedy.

Should your Committee, or the Board of Education hereafter desire the Principals to offer suggestions that would tend to relieve the annual examination from much of this complaint, perhaps it may be possible to suggest one or two important modifications. I am not aware, that for a period of nearly ten years, the opinion of the Male Principals has been asked or desired on this point.

I close by saying that I recognize most profoundly the value and necessity of a vigilant supervision over the schools, and that no one is more ready than I am to bear witness to the order and system that have been impressed on this supervision; to the

tremendous labor by which this has been reached and maintained; and to the marked general spirit of fairness and patience with which this labor has been accomplished. I am most deeply sensible of this; nor, while thus required to point out the influences of the marking system on the health of the teachers, am I insensible to the advantages that have flowed from the steady pressure on the great body of teachers in the schools through that system.

But it is a question in many minds whether the schools of the city now need this spur, which has long worn on the mental and physical energies of the teachers, and whether the time has not arrived when, with equally vigilant supervision in the same hands, some judicious modifications cannot be safely made.

In the spirit of a sincere desire to state kindly the truth, I have approached the discussion of the whole question, and in this spirit I close.

Mr. Chairman, and Gentlemen: I beg to thank you for your kind and patient attention.

The CHAIRMAN then announced Mr. THOMAS HUNTER, of Grammar School No. 35, who addressed the Committee as follows:

MR. CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN OF THE COMMITTEE:

There is a general opinion among the community that too much work is demanded by the Board of Education from both pupils and teachers. The Male Principals' Association, from which I have the honor to be a delegate, participates in this opinion, and has instructed my colleague and myself to present their views before your Committee, conformably to a preamble and resolutions adopted by your Honorable Board, February 19th and March 23d, 1868. Our instructions are embodied in five resolutions, unanimously adopted at a recent meeting of our Association. These resolutions are broad and general, and form the text for whatever change and modifications we may advocate. They are as follows:

1. *Resolved*, That it is the sense of this Association that too much work is demanded by the Board of Education from both pupils and teachers.

2. *Resolved*, That in the annual examination of the schools, no teacher shall be held responsible for a lower grade; and that the word "review" or "reviewed" be stricken out wherever it is used in connection with studies, the work in which in advance is readily separated from that which precedes, as in Geography, History, and Oral Instruction.

3. *Resolved*, That as the term "outlines" is very indefinite and a fruitful source of anxiety, it ought to be stricken out; and that the extent of study required for teachers and pupils should be indicated and limited with precision.

4. *Resolved*, That the whole "course of study" should be so modified and arranged that the great strain now exerted on the mental and physical energies of teachers and pupils should be removed.

5. *Resolved*, That in the opinion of this Association, the greatest pressure on the health of the class teacher arises from the fear of the class examination by the Superintendent, caused by the system of marking which is now used, and that this injurious pressure on the teacher affects also the pupils.

It will be well, gentlemen, to enlarge upon these resolutions, in their regular order, as the only method of pointing out whatever defects exist (or appear to exist) in the system. In relation to the first resolution, that of over-working the teachers and pupils, we are all well aware that it never was the intention of the Board of Education, or of any of its officers, to impose grievous burdens under which the teachers have been staggering for years. Any such design would pre-suppose deliberate cruelty, which is simply impossible. Indeed, the very resolutions of enquiry furnish the very best evidence, were any needed, that your Honorable Board is actuated by feelings of justice and humanity.

*Are the teachers and pupils over-worked? And how?—* These two questions contain the gist of the whole matter. The first we have already answered in the affirmative; the second we shall explain to the best of our ability.

Too many studies are pursued at the same time, which leads to confusion, book-teaching and "cramming" and prevents the proper assimilation of knowledge, for want of time to furnish the necessary instruction, and to permit the pupil to accomplish results by his own unaided efforts. When Lord Brougham was

asked how he learned so much outside of the requirements of his profession, he replied, that he brought a whole man to bear upon each study; or, in other words, he preformed one thing at a time, and preformed it well. It is the opinion of some of the ablest educators in the country that no more than three new studies should be pursued at the same time, and that these studies should be as dissimilar as possible, so that the change from one to the other, necessitating the employment of different faculties, will, in itself, furnish relief and recreation. In the new "course of studies" recently adopted, the teachers of the first grade are held responsible for nine different studies. It is true that some of these are review studies. Yet the teachers are as anxious about the one class of studies as about the other. Will not the effort to "cram" in these nine different branches create a mental dyspepsia, or completely choke the child? The exertions of the teacher to keep his class up in all these studies will compel him to have a great deal of work done out of school; will tend to haste, irritability, and injustice. Can a body increase in strength which is crammed with nine different kinds of food? Can a mind grow vigorous which has nine different studies stuffed into it at the same time? Better far to reduce the number by one-half, and give the pupil time to digest and assimilate the knowledge and instruction imparted. "Let him fill his mind full, and then talk it out."

But even more than the number of studies, responsibility for the lower grades exerts a baleful influence on the health and spirits of the teacher. That the classes should be reviewed, and particularly in the studies, which resemble a chain made up of many links, a defect in any of which destroys the strength of the whole, no intelligent teacher will deny. But it is a herculean task for a child or man to remember all he has gone over. As well expect the child to reproduce the food he ate six months ago. The best of it has been assimilated, and been converted into bone and muscle. So with many of the subjects taught. They have been assimilated, and have developed the powers of the mind. The mind that retains all, chaff as well as wheat, is poor in calibre, and can achieve but little in the battle of life. Education is two-fold in its nature: first, it develops the powers of the mind, and second, it imparts practical knowledge.

An able writer on education has said that "breadth of view should never be sacrificed to accuracy of detail." Interminable reviews of the lower grades may certainly lead to this "accuracy of detail," but at the expense of that comprehensiveness of grasp which lies at the foundation of all greatness. Many of the studies have performed their work on the mind in developing certain faculties. This end accomplished—the end being greater than the means—they may be abandoned without any great detriment to the learner. In fact, some studies are but intellectual dumb-bells, and should be cast aside whenever the intellectual muscle has been created.

Let us take history, for example. And, by the way, is it not a misnomer to call chronology, history? For what else than barren facts and bald dates are studied in our schools. Memorizing mere words and figures, rattling continually the skeleton; the very dry bones of history is worse than useless, for it has a tendency to crush out all taste or desire for genuine historical information. If a child must commit to memory, let him have selections from standard authors suited to his age and capacity, which will cultivate his taste and elevate his imagination. Will any gentleman pretend that he ever obtained any real knowledge of this subject except by reading. Suppose he had been requested to commit whole pages of even so beautiful a writer as Gibbon to memory, would he not have turned away from it in disgust? Herbert Spencer, one of the ablest thinkers of the age, says in his work on education:

"The historic information commonly given is almost valueless for purposes of guidance. Scarcely any of the facts set down in our school histories give any clue to the right principle of action. The biographies of monarchs (and our children commonly learn little else) throw scarcely any light upon the science of society. Familiarity with court intrigues, plots, usurpations or the like, and with all the personalities accompanying them, aids very little in elucidating the principles on which national welfare depends. We read of some squabble for power; that it led to a pitched battle; that such and such were the names of the generals and their leading subordinates; that they had each so many thousand infantry and cavalry, and so many cannon; that they arranged their forces in this and that order; that they manœuvred, attacked and fell back in certain ways; that at this part of the



day such disasters were sustained, and at that such advantages gained; that at one particular movement some leading officer fell, while another certain regiment was decimated; that after all the changing fortune of the fight the victory was gained by this or that army, and that so many were killed and wounded on each side and so many captured by the conquerors. And now, out of the accumulated details which make up the narrative, say which it is that helps you in deciding on your conduct as a citizen. Supposing that you had diligently read not only the 'fifteen decisive battles of the world,'<sup>5</sup> but accounts of all other battles that history mentions; how much more judicious would your vote be at the next election?"

Now, if this be true in a country where the franchise is limited, how much more to the point in a country where every man is a voter and where elections in many places occur twice a year? And even the history which Spencer describes is much fuller than any in use in our public schools. Further on, he says—

"That which it really concerns us to know is the natural history of society. We want all facts which help us to understand how a nation has grown."

The best history of the United States has been written by a Frenchman. De Tocqueville's book on America throws more light upon the growth of the United States than any other work extant; because he gives a history of society and of the growth of republican institutions from the township governments. A foreigner could obtain a better knowledge of the New England people, their manners, customs, morals and industries from Henry Ward Beecher's "Norwood," than from all the school histories ever published. Scott's *Ivanhoe* gives us a more complete idea of the people of England in the twelfth century than any history we have ever read. The method of teaching history in our schools is radically wrong, accomplishes no good purpose, but on the contrary does a vast amount of evil, in that it destroys all taste for historic reading; it increases the labor of the teacher and pupil without any corresponding benefit whatever. A history should be read intelligently before the class teacher, and the work of instruction should commence when the text-book has been laid aside. John Locke says—



“None of the things they are to learn should ever be made a burden to them or imposed on them as a task. Whatever is so proposed presently becomes irksome: the mind takes an aversion to it, though before it were a thing of delight or indifference. Let a child be but ordered to whip his top at a certain time every day, whether he has or has not a mind to; let this be but required of him as a duty, wherein he must spend so many hours morning and afternoon, and see whether he will not soon be weary of any play at this rate.”

These reviews have a tendency to crush out the God-given faculty of curiosity which lies at the foundation of the acquisition of knowledge; and this curiosity, Locke says, should be cherished. By going over and over again the same thing, the mind of the learner becomes weary and sick; for there is no variety, no freshness, no novelty. Is it any wonder that his studies, particularly history and geography, become as pleasant as castor oil or Epsom salts? Indeed, some of the ablest thinkers of the Old World recommend the abandonment of history altogether as a school study.

Adhering to the text of our instructions, the next thing to which we would call attention is the word “outline” or “outlines,” so frequently used in the course of study. The “Outlines of Geography” are a great puzzle to our younger teachers. Faithful and conscientious in the discharge of their duties, and anxious to meet the requirements of your Board, they are frequently at a loss to know how much or how little to teach, or where to draw the line of demarcation between the different grades. It were an easy matter to specify precisely and at some length the *minimum* of study in each grade, so that the poorest class in the poorest district of the city could accomplish it thoroughly and without anxiety or strain on the energies of pupils and teachers. According to the present system of teaching geography (in parts), if a pupil should happen to leave school in one of the lower grades, he might be tolerably instructed in one of the continents and know nothing whatever about the others. He might know South America with some degree of accuracy and know nothing of Europe or Asia. We would recommend to your Committee a totally different plan of instruction; namely, to teach in the lowest grade of Grammar School the whole world in bare “outline” and to define clearly

the subjects to be taught, as follows: the definitions of the equator, the tropics, the polar circles, the zones, the meridians, the horizon, latitude, longitude, the motions of the earth, the change of day and night, the change of seasons, the continents, the oceans; Australia, Greenland, Borneo, New Guinea, Madagascar, Great Britain and Ireland; the Himalaya, Altai, Caucasian, Carpathian, Alps, Pyrennees, Rocky and Andes mountains; the rivers Ganges, Amoor, Obi, Yang-tse-ki-ang, Danube, Rhine, Mississippi, and Amazon; the cities London, Paris, Constantinople, Rome, Calcutta, Peking, Yedo, New York, and Washington. An amount of descriptive geography so limited as this would give a child a tolerably good idea of the earth; and the arrangement is such that the teacher might explain thoroughly climate, productions, customs, religions, &c. Having completed this limit, there should be nothing in the rules of your Honorable Board to prevent the carrying on of the class into new and fresh matter, to keep alive the interest of the pupils. But the instructor should be held strictly responsible for the specified work of the grade. In the next grade, the whole world could be taught in a similar manner, but entering more minutely into political divisions, boundaries, and capitals; specifying accurately the subjects for which there must be responsibility. And so on through two more grades; thus finishing it forever, except where an occasional review or examination may be required for a special object, or to restore certain useful facts which might be in danger of passing out of the mind altogether. This plan would require two years, which ought to be sufficient to complete the study; and, if completed, more time could be given to other subjects without overtasking the scholars and teachers. This method of teaching geography would enable the instructor to succeed at least in the two lowest grades, without the aid of text books, and certainly without the aid of study at home. And, by the way, this home study, particularly in the lower classes, is a good deal of a farce. These younger scholars do not know how to study; and any one who has witnessed their efforts, their "vain repetitions," their wry faces at words whose pronunciation and meaning they know no more of than they do of Choctaw or Sanscrit, as I have, must pity the poor children, and wonder for what offence such punishment was

inflicted. What takes two or three hours from the play or rest of the child, damaging his health and stultifying his intellect, could be accomplished far better in half an hour under the direction of a competent teacher. If tasks are assigned at all for study out of school, they should be so simple and easy that they might be mastered in twenty or thirty minutes. But even these tasks should be carefully explained before-hand by the teacher. It is true that the City Superintendent has repeatedly recommended something of this sort in his annual reports; but as long as interminable reviews and accountability for lower grades are demanded, the teachers are constrained to have recourse to extensive study at home. They are obliged to hurry through the lessons in the most superficial manner; for so much has to be taught or "crammed" into the mind that one lesson (so to speak) treads on the heels of another.

"Should study out of school be required in any grade?" is a debatable question, and one that demands the serious consideration of your Committee, and perhaps the advice of medical men. If required at all, the lessons should be very simple, and given more with a view to create and foster habits of industry and self-reliance, than for the purpose of acquiring any great amount of knowledge. An old-fashioned spelling lesson, requiring fifteen or twenty minutes work at home, would effect the object aimed at. When a child has learned to read and write, even crudely, he should be compelled to put his knowledge into practical use, by writing composition; for by this means only can he acquire ease and fluency of expression. In this connection it may be well to state, that that highly important part of an education, composition, has been hitherto greatly neglected in our schools. The new "Course of Study," in this respect, is a very great improvement on the old. If history, geography and definitions were taught in school, and if general intelligence were the criterion of success, rather than accuracy of detail, the labors of the pupils and teachers would be very materially lightened.

The teaching of grammar, and particularly of grammatical analysis, has caused a vast and unnecessary consumption of time. So anxious are the teachers to accomplish satisfactory results in this department of study, that they are frequently obliged to

skim over, or omit entirely, for days and weeks together, other studies, equally, if not more, important. In the upper and middle classes fully one-fifth of the school-time is devoted to grammar. The time devoted to construction of sentences, to composition, amounting in many cases to almost nothing, and yet the object for which the pupils are supposed to study grammar is to learn to speak and write the English language with propriety. But is the end achieved? Are the results at all commensurate with the time and labor? Does the scholar speak and write correctly and gracefully after four years spent on grammar and grammatical analysis? Does he at the end of these four years use double negatives to express an affirmative? Does he use the pronoun "them" for the adjective "these?" Does he offend the ear by such expressions as "We was," "you was," "they was," "you and me was," "you and him was," &c., &c.? It is safe to say that, after all the parsing, all the analysis of simple, compound and complex sentences, with all their adjuncts and modifiers, simple and compound, the experience of teachers will sustain the statement that such are the general violations, and such the general expressions of pupils, even after they have reached the supplementary grades. I have seen boys nine years old, fresh from the teaching of intelligent mothers, apply for admission, speaking with propriety and elegance, and after passing through all the classes, parsing and analysing daily, leave the highest class to enter the Academy, after a successful examination in grammar, using far worse English to express their ideas than they did when they first entered the school in the lowest grade. The boy, when questioned, can give you the rules—can even explain clearly his own violations of syntax, but five minutes afterwards he will tell you that he "ain't got no slate," or that he could not find "them books." And why is this? Simply because he was not required to correct false syntax, (or, at least, not until lately;) he was not required to construct correct sentences; he was not required to put in practice the knowledge he had acquired. It was all analysis and little synthesis. An eminent writer on education says something to this effect:

"Two men learn the trade of watch-making; one spends six years in receiving instruction without practice; the other spends three years in receiving instruction, and three in practice. Which

will be the better watch-maker at the expiration of the six years? Unquestionably the man who practised on his instructions."

So it is with grammar: we have had, hitherto, too much teaching and too little practice; too much parsing and analysing and too little writing of composition. Definitions and rules and principles are committed to memory long before the scholar uses them. This is a violation of the ordinary course of nature, wearies the mind, and creates a disgust for books and studies.

It has been remarked that the growth of a nation from ignorance and barbarism to knowledge and refinement, is precisely similar to the intellectual growth of an individual. It is slow; it takes its own time; necessity at one time, fashion at another, impelling it forward. Language preceded and necessitated grammar. Grammar could not precede language, for that were an absurdity. And yet the study of the technology of grammar, with its perfects and plu-perfects, its infinitives and imperatives, its potentials and second futures, long before the child has mastered sufficient of the language to enable him to comprehend (even after a teacher has tried to explain them) the terms in use, is, in the highest degree, irrational and productive of evil. All right instruction is suited to the capacity of the learner. Babies are fed with milk, and, as they grow older and stronger, the food becomes richer and more substantial.

When a child has enough of language at command to write a letter or composition, set him to work to make something—to tell something; and if he is properly managed, this writing can be made exceedingly pleasant. Then, and not till then, should Grammar be introduced. The scholar observes its use—that it is the working tool of language. But instead of this, we have been making language the working tool of Grammar. It may be objected that the writing of composition is the most disagreeable work performed *in* the schools. But how many times is it ever taught *in* the schools? Is it not taught—when taught at all—*out* of the schools? Little children are given such simple subjects as "Truth," "Integrity," "Honor," "Piety," "Virtue," and the like, upon which they are to write their ideas between Friday afternoon and Monday morning, and that too while embarrassed with three or four lessons equally pressing, and, perhaps, equally understood. Why, Pharaoh's de-



mand for brick without straw was more "merciful than this. But the teachers should teach *in* the schools, and should give subjects for composition with which their pupils are acquainted. Doubtless they should, if they had the time. But the pressure is such that they have not the time. And we must remember, too, that many of our younger teachers went through precisely the same *curriculum* before, in which excellence in composition was never a demand of your Honorable Board. Deficiency in expression is the greatest defect in our Public School system; and this can only be remedied by substituting composition for grammatical analysis in the lower classes. Francis Wayland says:

"But lastly and above all, let me insist upon the importance of universal practice of everything that is learned. No matter whether it be a rule in Arithmetic, *or a rule in Grammar*, a principle in rhetoric, or a theorem in the Mathematics; as soon as it is learned and understood let it be practiced. Let exercises be so devised as to make the pupil familiar with its application. *Let him construct exercises for himself.*"

In the same connection Horace Mann gives a similar advice.

"Unfortunately," he says, "education among us, at present, consists too much in *telling*, not in *training* on the part of parents and teachers; and, of course, in *hearing* and not in *doing* on the part of children and pupils."

To follow the excellent advice of these two great men—to practice continually—to *train* and not merely to *tell*, time is absolutely indispensable, and time, under our present system of studies, the teachers have not. The number of studies is bad enough; but when to this is added interminable reviews, your Committee must perceive that for lack of time, there must be, we repeat, haste, inaccuracy and "cramming," instead of steady practice and rational training. Nay, further, this very system creates *inattention*; and one-third the school time is frequently wasted by the teacher to maintain what is called "order." Irritation, and a spirit of antagonism sometimes spring up between the class and the instructor, because attention is demanded where all interest has ceased; and to make up for lost time long review lessons are given to be studied out of school. These things are destructive of the health and happiness of the teachers and pupils. Can we create and



foster a love of knowledge by making the study of books a punishment? How many an anxious father has made his son hate the Bible, by ordering him to commit so many verses of the Psalms to memory for yawning in church, or for falling asleep while listening to doctrines he could not understand! If infidelity arise because the Bible is made an instrument of punishment, who is to blame? The asceticism of the middle ages, with its hard, dry tasks, its vain repetitions, its stupid memorizings, its useless culture, (if culture it might be called which caused men to hate each other, and made them narrow-minded bigots,) has disappeared to a great extent before the sun of natural science. Children should be happy in school; their lessons should be pleasant and interesting; there should be variety and novelty, and the faculty of curiosity should never be crushed out by continually reviewing the same things.

The last resolution adopted by the Principals' Association, giving it as their opinion that the greatest pressure on the health of the teachers arises from the system of marking the classes by the Superintendents in their examinations, is, perhaps, the most important of all—the one that requires the most careful and serious consideration. There must be supervision and accountability. Teachers do not ask to be relieved from responsibility. They simply seek such a modification of the system of marking the classes as will remove the dread under which they now labor. They complain that the percentages are frequently used against them, seldom in their favor. They complain that responsibility for grades which they have not taught keeps them in a continual state of terror—that notwithstanding repeated reviews, weekly and sometimes semi-weekly, it is impossible to make their pupils remember all they have been over. They complain that for weeks prior to examination their nerves have been unstrung, and that they have passed sleepless nights thinking over their classes. And is this to be wondered at, when it is taken into consideration that 74 per cent., two years in succession, causes the loss of certificate, and a consequent loss of employment? Disgrace and deprivation of "bread and butter" are no simple things to the imaginations of sensitive and delicate ladies. The sword of Damocles is suspended above their heads. A new Trustee has been elected by certain influences.

He has promised, or bartered away for votes, positions in the Schools to the female relatives of the men who helped to elect him. There are not vacancies enough; he cannot fulfill his promises; he scans the Superintendent's records; he finds, out of sixty or seventy teachers in the ward, two or three whose marks are low; he waits, he watches, and, on the first favorable opportunity, the sword falls and off goes the teacher's official head. Gentlemen, this is no fancy sketch. Else why has your Honorable Board interposed again and again to prevent the removal of teachers without good cause? You must be aware that in many cases Trustees sought excuses for removals. If not, why has the Board of Education thrown around the teachers so many safeguards? But it may be said that a teacher who has been marked low for two years should be removed for the good of the School. To this there are several objections:

1. The percentages are but approximations at the best.
2. Success or non-success may sometimes be the result of accident.
3. The examiner is not infallible, nor omniscient (I say this with all due respect).
4. The atmosphere may exert a baleful influence over the spirits of the scholars.
5. The teacher's anxiety and terror may have been reflected on the class in such a manner as to cause it to do much worse on examination than at any other time for one month previous.
6. A panic may seize a class as an army.

But there are so many reasons why a good instructor might receive only 74 per cent. two years in succession, that they must strike the mind of any one who reflects upon the subject, or who has had any experience in class examinations. I need not go over them here. The publicity given to these marks creates an unwholesome emulation, leads to "cramming," book-teaching, and over-work in and out of school. The better instructor may receive two or three per cent. less than the inferior one; and this inferior teacher may assume "airs" in consequence, and claim privileges not compatible with proper discipline. Until this 74 per cent. law is repealed, and until publicity of marks ceases, you will never find your teachers taking pleasure in their business, and working with that freedom and ease by which alone the best results can be accomplished. No human being can work successfully while under the influence of fear; for it clouds the intellect and saps the

constitution. That is the reason we have so many sick teachers; and this sickness is very costly, as the pay-rolls for the last five years can testify. It was never the intention of the Board or of the Superintendent to establish a system of terror. Quite the contrary. But an examination into the facts will demonstrate, beyond question, that terror does exist. Then the only inference is, that there is grievous misunderstanding somewhere. This misunderstanding should be understood.

Three particular marks have hitherto shown the result of the teacher's work: First, the *percentage* of accuracy in studies; second, the *grade* or standing of the class; and third, the *training* or methods of instruction pursued. According to the requirements of the Board of Education, making every teacher responsible not only for the present grade but for every grade below, if there be by accident one deficient teacher in the school, the danger of failure to every teacher above is greatly increased. But there should be no promotion until the grade has been thoroughly completed. Doubtless. Suppose it is thoroughly completed—date, fact, town, river, definition, everything in arithmetic, grammar, history and geography—how will it be six months afterwards? Will not the pupil have forgotten one third of all he had learned in the lower grade? How long would it take a young man to go through College, if, at the end of the Sophomore year he were required to pass an examination in the Freshman, and, if again at the end of the junior year, he were compelled to pass a successful examination in Junior, Sophomore and Freshman; and last of all, if at the end of the Senior year he were obliged to stand the ordeal of a successful examination in all four years? Unless he were an extraordinary genius, it would require him to study fifteen or twenty years, or until he was old, bald and blind, and after that he would be good for nothing.

The grade of the class has not, it is true, annoyed the class-teacher so much as the percentage in the studies; but the publicity given to the grades, tending as it does to cause comparisons to be made between class and class, and between school and school, has created anxiety and dread on the part of the principal, for fear his school might be *graded low*. The wants of the schools are so different—the locations are so totally

unlike—the people so heterogenous, that no fair comparisons can be made. If fairly made, it would require a volume to explain why School No. 2009, at the Battery, ought not to stand as high as School No. 2017, near the Central Park.

This difference is becoming more striking every year. In one part of the city scholars remain until they are twenty years of age; in another, they leave before the age of thirteen. Comparisons by percentage and grade can not and ought not to be made between schools so widely different in every way.

Long ago, the examinations were simply farces. There appeared to be no responsibility. The teachers read novels and wrote poetry (such as it was), took it easy, and had a “good time” generally; gave their boys long examples in long division, while they pored over Watson’s Practice of Medicine or Blackstone’s Commentaries, preparing themselves for physicians or lawyers, and using teaching as a stepping stone to something higher and better—in their estimation. No reflection on the medical and legal gentlemen who now adorn the profession of teaching. Those to whom I allude have passed away. I am speaking of “long ago.” Of course there were as good and true teachers, men and women, in those days as there are now. But, nevertheless, many acted as described above. The rigid mathematical system that succeeded when a whole department was examined and uniformly marked by the same superintendent, I have always defended individually as the most exact and thorough that we have ever had. That it elevated the schools, that it drove out incompetent and lazy teachers, and that it infused a new energy into all the departments, I have never entertained a doubt. It was the knife of a surgeon: the ulcer was cut out: the patient recovered. This was a good work and well done. At present the surgeon’s knife is not necessary; and if it were necessary, instead of an approximation, there should be mathematical accuracy in order to secure justice; and no schools should be compared but those examined by the same Superintendent. Let there be accountability, but the marks should be private. If a teacher fail to reach the proper standard, let the principal and the Superintendent privately warn him or her; but there should be no exposure, and above all there

should be no *injustice*, for "oppression maketh a wise man mad."

Gentlemen, you have called for our opinions: freely, fully, frankly they are given, in the hope that the experience of many years may be of some little service to the great cause of Public Education in which we are all deeply interested.

MISS MARY A. SIMMS, Principal of the Female Department of Grammar School No. 11, was then introduced, and spoke as follows :

The Principals of the Female Grammar Schools, in response to the request of your Committee, respectfully offer, as their opinion, that all just complaint concerning over-taxation of teachers and pupils, resulting from the course of studies prescribed by the Board of Education, will be found to have originated in one or more of the following causes :

1st. The indefiniteness of the prescribed course as laid down in the Manual of the Board.

2d. The continuous review required by the course.

3d. The great number of studies required at one time in the supplementary course.

The first mentioned cause of complaint—indefiniteness—occasions much anxiety to the teacher, and much needless memorizing of details—particularly of Geography and United States History—on the part of the pupils. The lectures given at the Normal School are a valuable aid in defining the work of each grade, but as they are not published they are not always available, and the teacher is too frequently left to guess how much of any subject may be required under the head of "Outlines."

The second point—the continuous review—is the most fruitful source of complaint, and is the cause, to a great extent, of the third difficulty—the great number of studies required at one time.

The lowest class in the Grammar Department, in addition to its own proper work, reviews the work done in the Primary Department; the next class takes up some fresh work and reviews that done in the preceding grades, and so on through



the Grammar School Course, each teacher being responsible not only for her own work, but for that of the teacher below. Some of this review is necessary, and if the work is *definitely* understood, and the classes thoroughly taught, it need not be oppressive in the lower grades; but in the first Grammar School grade, under the most favorable circumstances, it becomes burdensome to pupil and teacher. In this grade, the pupils are harassed by the attempt to retain all the details of United States History, and the geography of every country on the globe; while the teacher is forced to spend so much time in going over these details that she too often loses the opportunity for the mental development of her pupils.

It is true that much of this geography has been studied in previous grades, but every practical teacher knows that the details of a subject will pass from the mind unless kept there by constant review, and that this review is more tiresome and worrying to the pupil than the acquisition of fresh knowledge.

As a means of relieving this grade, we would recommend that local geography only be required in the First Grade, as it affords an intelligent view of the whole subject of geography that would be quite sufficient for all practical purposes.

It is also recommended that astronomy be taken out of this grade, and left entirely to the supplementary course.

The supplementary course is divided into two grades, each to occupy one year or more; but, as the pupil is accountable at the end of the course for all the studies of both grades, a young lady presented as a candidate for graduation, must be prepared to pass an examination in the following studies:

Reading.

Spelling.

Definitions.

Etymology.

English Grammar and Composition.

Arithmetic.

Algebra—through Quadratic Equations.

Geometry.

Natural Philosophy.

Astronomy.

Physiology and Hygiene.



- Ancient History, } Including Greece and Rome, with a brief  
outline of the history of other countries.  
Modern History, } A brief general outline of European His-  
tory, English and French more in detail.  
Rhetoric—with exercises in Analysis and Criticism.  
English Literature.  
French or German Language.  
Latin, is optional.

We are not obliged by the Board of Education to take up all these subjects at once, we are not obliged to complete the course within any given period; we may take all the time we think necessary (provided that we can keep our scholars), but whether two or five years be taken, an unhealthful strain upon the energies of teachers and pupils must come in the *last year*, when it becomes necessary to review all the subjects above mentioned, in order to be ready for the examination. Hence, notwithstanding that we are not compelled by the Board to take all these studies at once, we are practically obliged to review or have them all under consideration during the last year, otherwise, our pupils must be left to take their chance of failure in the examination, which they consider an overwhelming disgrace.

We have no complaint to make of the examination itself; it is conducted with remarkable fairness and kindness, there is a general feeling of confidence in the examiners, and in the justice of their decisions, but, so long as these studies are required at one examination, we shall continue to hear that teachers and pupils are overtaxed, because too many studies are required at one time. We would recommend that this supplementary course be so arranged that an examination shall not be required in all the studies at any one time; that teachers shall know exactly what studies shall be required at every examination; that arithmetic and that part of grammar which relates to "parsing" and the "analysis of sentences," shall not be required in the higher grade of the course, and that throughout the grammar school and supplementary courses, whenever the pupils shall have thoroughly studied any subject or distinct division of a subject, and shall have passed a satisfactory examination in the same, neither pupil nor teacher shall be further re-

sponsible for such subject, except so far as it may be absolutely essential to the understanding of studies afterward pursued.

Miss MARGARET A. MCCOSKER, Principal of the Female Department of Grammar School No. 24, continued the discussion, as follows :

*First.*—The “ marking system,” by percentage, was objected to by some of the female principals, but no action was taken upon it, principally for want of a better substitute ; though it was admitted that an exact measure of the mental capacity of pupils, could not be reached exactly by the Superintendent, or any other stranger. That physical defects, such as deafness, stammering, nervousness and the like, would prevent the most intellectual from appearing to advantage in an examination.

Limiting the “ supplementary class” to twenty-five was objected to by some, but no action was taken thereon.

*Secondly.*—One great cause of the overtaking of both teacher and pupil, arises from the *unnecessary* absence of scholars, thus necessitating a constant repetition of the subject of the preceding day for the benefit of the pupils absent on that day, or otherwise leaving them at a disadvantage, thereby causing trouble to the teacher, and loss of time to the rest of the class. If some *effective rule* could be adopted by the Board of Education preventing this, a great moral and educational benefit would be done to the community.

Mrs. M. E. McCLOSKEY, Principal of the Primary Department of Grammar School No. 17, offered the following argument :

Are we satisfied with the present grade of studies ? We are.

But we think that the rules governing their acquisition in the higher grades, are too arduous, consequent on the *prohibition* by the Board of Education, for children in the Primary to take any books to their houses for the purpose of studying. It is, therefore, requested that the by-laws relating to said prohibition may be rescinded, so that we may have the privilege to permit the scholars of the two higher grades, to take their books home.

An able educator has said that "oral instruction can never supply the place of study;" the mind, by *merely receiving*, gains no vigor of its own, and that scholars must be made, if made at all, mainly by their own exertions in the use of books. As it is at present, a portion of the time that should be devoted to actual teaching, is spent by the pupils in acquiring the lessons of the day. After which study, they become somewhat wearied, and consequently restless. This state of things produces a strain upon the nervous system, superinduced by her anxiety to preserve the order necessary to enable her to conduct the recitations profitably to them; we think that it is partially attributable to the limited modes of punishment allowable. All must be aware that there are children who cannot be taught by the eye or ear; neither example or precept appear to have any effect upon them. This class of children, under existing circumstances, prove from time to time a great trial to the teacher.

2d. The frequent transfer of teachers, from the Primary to the Grammar Departments, has a very injurious effect upon the children and the teachers who remain, as it involves the necessity of constantly training teachers for primary duties, and the desired results cannot be attained in a week or a month—(therein lies the injury.)

We contend that it requires a greater amount of tact to teach young children, and give them correct ideas, than those who are older. When a child's mind begins to unfold, it should have *talent* and *experience* to mould and guide it aright. Education is development. It is not instruction merely—it is discipline—a waking up of the mind and its powers to observe, and think, and remember, etc. It is not merely recitation hearers, it is educators that we need for this important purpose. In most cases, persons' future greatness depends upon the correct training they receive in early life; and, indeed, the forming of the character of the future citizen depends upon this correct training, both mental and moral.

3d. The overcrowding of the classes, and the total want of proper class-room accommodations, are the fruitful source of a

good deal of mischief, and well calculated to debilitate both teachers and scholars. The galleries in some localities where the infant classes are taught, are so dark, that it is impossible for them to see a word on the charts or blackboard. I feel confident that the foundation of many serious diseases are laid. Children are like plants, they need the sunlight and air. Wherever this state of things exists, we trust that they will be remedied—not only by regulating numbers, but by remodeling class-rooms, and finding some means whereby the sunlight may be admitted to those darkened galleries.

These are principal views to be considered by this Honorable Body, and we hope that you will find the remedy.

MR. WILLIAM J. KENNARD, Vice-Principal of Male Grammar School No. 16, was announced by the Chairman to continue the discussion, and spoke as follows :

MR. CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN OF THE COMMITTEE: The Vice-Principals, in obedience to your request, have met during the past few weeks, have considered the subjects to which you have referred their attention, and have delegated my colleague and myself to lay before you their views upon the topics under consideration this evening. They received your communication in which you request information upon the following subjects :

1. On the course of studies pursued.
2. The number of studies.
3. The rules governing their acquisition and teaching.
4. The time required for their completion.
5. As to the amount of labor performed by the teachers, and
6. As to the time devoted to study by pupils.

The complaint, you say, is, that these studies and labors are too arduous, and cause serious injury to the physical and mental energies of teachers and pupils.

The speaker was not aware, when he was called upon to appear before your Honorable Body, that a written argument of any kind would be received, but understood that delegates were to present their views *orally*. It was supposed by my colleague and those whom we represent, that the reason of this was, that

you were probably afraid that the delegates would take up too much time and become prolix. The speaker is, for these reasons, without a written argument, but he will endeavor to support the resolutions by such points of arguments as seem best to him under the circumstances.

You will naturally suppose that the ladies and gentlemen who have preceded us with their views have cut largely into the argument which we present, and the principal points of which are embraced in these resolutions. The Vice-Principals, whom my colleague and myself have the pleasure of representing before you, adopted these resolutions with great unanimity. I do not know that there was a dissenting voice to any of them. There are six of these resolutions of the Male Vice-Principals in relation to the course of studies, all of which were adopted. I will now read—

*Resolutions of the Male Vice-Principals in relation to the  
Course of Studies, adopted April 24th, 1868.*

*Resolved*, That in the opinion of the Male Vice-Principals, the course of studies in the three highest grades comprises more than can be taught thoroughly to the pupils of those grades.

*Resolved*, That the retention in any grade of a study which is completed in a preceding grade is unnecessary ; and that where *outlines* and *elements* are prescribed, they should be defined by particularizing the things to be taught.

*Resolved*, That the abolishment of the Introductory Class in the College of New York, and a modification of the course of study in the College, and in the first grade of the supplementary course in Male Grammar Schools, so as to form a continuous chain of instruction, would be beneficial.

*Resolved*, That in examinations by the Superintendent, no class ought to be held responsible for the studies of a preceding grade.

*Resolved*, That we do not recommend, so far as the three highest grades are concerned, any change in the maximum number of hours now allowed for home study.

*Resolved*, That whereas we consider an equitable system of marking a protection to the good teacher, we recommend the substitution of adjectives of degree, in place of the present method.

You will perceive that in some of these Resolutions we are a little more definite than in those presented by the Principals, and this is of course owing to the fact that they have had to deal generally with the whole subject, while the Teachers have been engrossed by matters that come directly under their supervision.

We therefore feel more confident when we speak our opinions upon the studies of the three highest grades than upon any others, for shut up as we are in the four walls of the class rooms every day we are not able to discuss the subjects more directly referred to in your circular. We say of the matters upon which information is called in the first resolution that the course of studies in these three highest grades comprises more than can be taught thoroughly to the pupils of those grades. Such has been our experience for many years, and such we believe to be the fact. Some time ago I was asked by a person if I would prepare a list of the studies comprised of the old grade—not this recent grade, and if I would give the number of hours of actual study and employment, and I learned that it was for the purpose of lightening our labors. To a little extent this has been done. There have been several grades reduced already, but we can do more. I ask your attention for a few moments to some statistics upon this point which I have prepared; we have in the regular first grade thirteen studies distinctly enumerated as follows; and as it is found on page 119 of the Manual:

*First Grade.*—Reading, Spelling and Definitions; Etymology, continued, with analysis of words and their formation from given roots; mental and written Arithmetic—through square root and its simple applications; Geography—oral and descriptive; English Grammar—continued; Composition; History of the United States; Astronomy; oral instruction continued, with the simple facts pertaining to commerce; also with current events of general interest and importance, as recorded in the periodicals of the day; and Penmanship shall be taught in this grade as in the other grades.

Besides these studies, and further on in the Manual, are others which do not appear in the Grade, but which are to be found under Section No. 91, as follows:

“Drawing, with exercises in perspective, and the delineation



of objects, *shall* be taught in the Grammar Schools in the Third, Second, and First Grades," etc.

These, I believe, make thirteen distinct studies, in all, comprised in the course prescribed in the first grade. In addition to this, in some cases—I suppose nearly all cases—vocal music is taught, and besides that, under the provisions of the same section, the German language is taken up. Neither of these two last-named studies, it is true, are compulsory, but from circumstances over which the teachers have no control, the subjects *are* taken up, and necessarily consume time. Now, the school day is six hours in length, and if we deduct from this, one and a half hours which is required or exhausted by recesses, for time taken in opening the school, in reading the Scriptures, singing, literary exercises, and attentions shown to visitors, (and we certainly do lose about an hour and a half each day, owing to the facts and circumstances I have just mentioned), we then have left for us, for actual instruction, just four and a half hours per day, or a total of twenty-two and a half hours during the entire week. If, however, we divide this total amount of time by the actual number of studies we have, it will be seen we have an average of one hour and thirty-seven minutes devoted to each study in the whole week.

Now, I submit to you, gentlemen of the Committee, the question whether we can be expected to accomplish much instruction in one hour and thirty-seven minutes devoted to each study during the week, when even a great portion of that brief time is taken up in hearing the recitation, and explaining the following lessons to pupils. Take, for instance, under the present graded system of our schools, the single study of arithmetic. We are expected to instruct our classes thoroughly and efficiently in that branch, but ought we to receive less than one hour each day in which to do so? There is no gentleman who teaches a class in the highest grade but would infinitely prefer one hour and a half each day for that study alone, but under existing rules it is impossible to devote any such length of time to it.

Next in importance in the course of studies is Grammar. Shall we give less than one hour each day to the recitations and explanations of this branch of education? Here are eight hours out of the twenty-two and a half hours of the entire week given

up to two important studies, to the absolute and unavoidable neglect of those requiring much attention. Composition is one of the many branches thus restricted, and you cannot pretend to give proper instruction in that study in thirty minutes; you cannot give such explanation on the subject as the interests of the pupils actually require. We must have the time requisite to teach our classes efficiently and properly. We are willing to give the whole school day to teaching, and do all we can within that time. But at present we can neither do justice to the pupils or to the studies, and so there are, in fact, studies which we leave out entirely. With reference to the examination, we are interested principally in finding of what it will consist, and the main questions are: What are we likely to be first examined in? What next? And how much? So that we may, if possible, divine just so much as will allow us to go through with the examination. We say, then, that the number of studies in the three higher grades comprises more than can be taught thoroughly to the pupils of those grades, and we ask whether we ought not to have a remedy for this state of affairs; whether we ought not to have a grade that we *can* teach to the pupils of our classes?

The Supplementary Grades also embrace too many studies, and are too much taken up by reviews. This latter system of reviews, is too prominent a feature of these grades to allow us to carry out the intention of the formation and arrangement of these grades under our present system, and we think that both of these supplementary grades might, with advantage to both teachers and pupils, be rendered more definite. There is much that is taught in the second grade that has been already fully taught and explained in the preceding grades, and might, we think, with propriety, be omitted. The first supplementary grade has hardly yet been tried sufficiently, and it is therefore impossible for us to say whether we can get on in that successfully or not.

It may be said that in the three higher grades we are allowed one year or more to go through each of them. That would be all very well if we could retain our scholars from January to December. But that would be supposing something that, as a rule, does not occur. Our scholars are always leaving us; they

leave us every month, and this is more particularly the case when business is good, and new scholars have to be dovetailed into classes already considerably advanced, as they come in; and we cannot hope throughout the year to keep the same scholars.

In the second resolution we say, that "the retention in any grade of a study which is completed in a preceding grade is unnecessary; and that where outlines and elements are prescribed, they should be defined by particularizing the things to be taught." Let us examine our grades thoroughly upon the subject embraced in this resolution. If we take this second resolution and divide it, and deal with it in separate clauses, it may, however, be better adapted for discussion, and we will consider the first half down as far as the word "unnecessary." We shall, therefore, in accordance with that portion of the resolution, ask, in the first grade, that geography be stricken out. Our reason is, not that the children should not be taught fully on this subject, but we find it all in the fourth grade. We find geography there of exactly the same grade that we find in the first grade. If geography has been taught in the other grade, there is no necessity that we should go through it again in the same form in the first grade. If it is taught thoroughly as prescribed in the fourth grade there can be no necessity for our reviewing here, and the scholar will still have mastered sufficient geography to go into the world. With physical geography we do not ask this; we know that that is important, but with a proper course of lectures on this branch of geography, even, we think, much could be done that would advance the interests of the pupils, while it would also materially lighten the labors of the teachers. But to ask us to teach the geography of Africa, Asia, and Oceanica, with a general review, and the outlines of physical geography, is, we think, a plan that involves a great deal of time, study, and labor, and necessitates the loss of time which could be applied profitably to other branches of education.

In other studies of the first grade we have some more suggestions to make. These are, that definitions be stricken out of this grade. It is directed to be taught here "as in the second grade," and, we think, that the time could be better employed by applying it to etymology, with the analysis of words, and

their formation from given roots. We ask this on the score of time. Should your honorable body consider this suggestion as expedient, we pray that definitions and etymology be put together in the first grade, and that will rid us of one of the studies which we think are too numerous in that grade.

While, however, we ask that some studies be stricken out of the various grades, there are others which, we think, might with advantage be transferred from certain grades and taught in others, and with this view we ask that drawing be taken out of the First Grade. At present it is embraced in the First Supplementary Grade, and it is our opinion that it would be unnecessary to the ordinary course of studies. Drawing would necessarily take up some time, as, by the time you have the scholars prepared, the implements given out, etc., if the usual proportion of time allotted to other studies prevails, it will be time that the lesson is concluded.

We ask, also, that you consider the propriety of introducing into this grade the study of algebra, and that the grade may study it in the four simple rules and factoring. My colleague has submitted a report to me in which it recommended by the Regents of the University that the subject of algebra should be taken up by pupils directly after such a course of studies as are here prescribed in the second grade, and the Regents recommend the taking up of algebra exactly in that place. This, therefore, we ask of you may be done. Book-keeping, too, might be introduced in the first grade.

In the second grade of the supplementary course we have "History and Constitution of the United States." To be sure, they are put in one line, and they have a period at the end of the words "United States," but we cannot do otherwise than call them two different studies, and have to teach them as such. Now, as "History of the United States" has been "completed" in the ordinary first grade, we ask of you that we be not compelled, in the second supplementary grade, to take up this "History" again, and do something else with it. The study has been already "completed" in a preceding grade, and should not be introduced here. Such a modification we ask of the second supplementary grade. These studies, geography and history, are *memoriter* studies, and always require that we should give

them proper *time* to make them profitable studies, both to scholars and instructors; and so where *memoriter* studies are "completed," as "History of the United States" is in the first grade, we ask that you let them stop when "completed." The student can pursue these studies at any age in after life.

The second portion of this resolution refers to the "outlines" and "elements" which occur so frequently in our three grades. We say they should be defined by particularizing the things to be taught. These words occur very frequently. Thus we find in the first grade of the regular course of studies "Astronomy, elementary; the solar system, with an explanation of the ordinary phenomena;" in the second grade of the supplementary course we have "Astronomy, continued," and in the next, or first supplementary grade, the *elements* of astronomy are to be taken up. First, the astronomy shall be "elementary;" next, that astronomy shall be "continued;" and next, in the highest grade of the whole series, or course of studies, we shall teach the "*elements*" of astronomy. We ask that these branches of this grade may have distinct latitudes apportioned to them in in each grade—in the first regular grade and in the first and second supplementary grades. If a strict and definite space is given to us in any part of our work, we shall be able to accomplish the results desired; but we ought not to teach the elements again.

"In "Oral Instruction," in the first grade, I am instructed to ask that "the simple facts," which relate to commerce shall be specified, so that we may know what are "the simple facts" to be taught on this subject of commerce. One teacher may not understand so well as another what are the "simple facts." Unless these things which, it must be acknowledged are very confused and ill-defined, be rendered definite, it can hardly be supposed that the classes could undergo a thoroughly creditable examination, but if our requests can be complied with, we believe we can and will endeavor to attain the creditable standard.

In the first supplementary grade we have the "outlines of plane and solid Geometry, with applications to mensuration and practical plane trigonometry; also the use of logarithmic tables." Now, gentlemen, what shall we do with that? What



books shall we take? Shall we take the nine books of Davies' *Le Gêndre*, the six books of Davies' *Elementary Geometry*, or Docharty's *Geometry*? If it means that we shall teach the properties of the polygon, let us teach that, if the properties of the circle, let us teach that, or if it be measurement area, let us teach that, or at least, let us know what certain numbers of books we have to go through. If we are to go through the nine books of *Le Gêndre*, it is very likely that a large majority of the pupils of the schools of New York will never graduate. If there is to be a smaller number of books, we ask that they be defined.

So, also, with the "Science of Government, including a knowledge of the Constitution of the United States and of the State of New York, with the outlines of Municipal and International Law." Gentlemen, the pupils have been already fully taught the Constitution of the United States in the preceding grade, in connection with History of the United States, and we pray that it be taken out of the first supplementary grade. We can, after they have studied it in the second supplementary grade, give, if absolutely required, a certain amount of lecturing to the classes upon that subject which is necessary for their after life, and there we should desire to leave it, without taking up the whole subject and teaching it as an original lesson. In regard, therefore, to this study of the Constitution, we request, that if it be taught in the former grade, it be left there when completed, and the time which would be devoted to going through the study again be given to something else. The Constitution of the State of New York, we know, in its general features, to be somewhat similar to the Constitution of the United States, but when it comes to the "outlines" of Municipal and International Law, it again becomes a very different affair. We ask you, gentlemen, where shall we ever stop? or where shall we ever go if we do not stop? Leaving aside, for a moment, Municipal Law, we have before us International Law, a subject which has for years engaged the attention of the ablest minds of the nineteenth century. What can we be expected to teach on a subject like this, which is not yet so accurately defined as to be considered a perfected science by those who have devoted years to it? Besides, we have no book by which we can get these subjects before our pupils! I have a little book



called "Alden's Science of Government." The great bulk of the book, which of itself, however, is not very large, is taken up by the Constitution of the United States, about one and a half pages to the Constitution of the State of New York, and one or two pages are devoted exclusively to the outlines of Municipal and International Law. If that be the "outlines," we shall not object to teach it, but we think that that outline of International Law is hardly worth teaching.

Such changes as I have referred to, therefore, we ask in relation to these indefinite outlines and reviews of studies which have been taught in the preceding grades, and we think we may then be able to find time to complete the course of studies as it should be then laid down.

The third resolution is different in character from any of those which precede it, and is a subject which has not been approached by any one of the speakers this evening. It reads as follows:

*Resolved*, That the abolishment of the Introductory Class in the College of New York, and a modification of the course of study in the College, and in the first grade of the Supplementary Course in Male Grammar Schools, so as to form a continuous chain of instruction, would be beneficial."

We mean, that it would be beneficial to the pupils of the classes. I wish here to present a few statistics upon this question, which will I believe, illustrate our ideas upon this point, though in my statistics I may be a little at fault. I think that every year there are sent up to the New York College about five hundred pupils from our Grammar Schools, and many of them go there, it is firmly believed, with no definite idea of staying. They go there merely as a means of obtaining a recommendation. If they can secure from that institution a certificate that they have prepared at that College, they leave it, and immediately go down to engage places in offices and places of business with very little else to recommend them for such positions except the fact that they hold their certificates from the College.

There is no teacher who has prepared a class for the New York College, who will say that the examination is not perfectly easy, and unless the pupil is very dull and stupid, or does not wish to be admitted, he is certain of passing. A number of

pupils have been rejected, who have been sent there, because they were not prepared exactly with the style of questions which were to be given them, while others who were inferior scholars have succeeded in passing an examination by judging with tolerable accuracy as to the subject or particular branches of subjects upon which they were to be examined. In the study of Algebra, for instance, I have endeavored to test the probability of succeeding in such an attempt, and I have been able to tell very nearly what questions would come; and this I arrived at by reasoning from the questions of preceding years. Now, gentlemen, it is generally acknowledged that the examination to admit pupils into that introductory class is a very easy one, though the time was, when the institution was first formed, that to secure admission to that institution was hard work. The greatest trouble now with scholars is to make them believe that it is difficult.

THE CHAIRMAN: I would suggest to the speaker that the studies of the New York College are not under consideration here, and think it better that he should confine himself more closely to the subject related to in the call for the meeting.

COMMISSIONER WEST: I would desire to state, as one of the Committee, that I think the gentleman in order, and ask that he be allowed to proceed.

MR. KENNARD (resuming): I do not suppose that the Chairman meant exactly that I was out of order. I am endeavoring to confine myself as well as I can to the subjects embraced in the call, and, in connection therewith, allude to the studies required for admission into the institution referred to. Of the whole number, which I have stated to be about five hundred, of those who leave our Schools and go to the College, I, of course, cannot say exactly how many remain during the first year; but I know that many leave and come back to our Schools again. I have some statistics which I have taken from the Report of the Trustees to the Board of Regents, which show that last year the total number of pupils in this introductory class was three hundred and ninety-seven. In the Freshmen Class the number was one hundred and twenty seven, showing an excess of two hun-

dred and seventy in the former class, or a majority of more than two-thirds. Half of this last number, I think, could be retained in our Grammar Schools, under the same instructors that they have been under for the past few years, and carried on in a course of instruction equivalent to the course pursued in the introductory class at the College of New York. We think this would result in greater benefit to the pupils than when they go there and spend a period of three or four months under tuition. We even go as far as to say that we believe that the abolishment by the College of this introductory class will be in itself a benefit to that institution.

This change also would relieve *us* of the necessity of preparing our classes for *two* examinations in the same year, at one time for the College, and at another for the examination of the Superintendent.

I have now spoken at some length upon these three first resolutions, and if anything I have said—and I can hardly tell just at present what I have said—may seem to be arbitrarily spoken, I take the liberty of asking that it be not so considered.

The subjects referred to by the three remaining resolutions will be considered by my associate.

On behalf of those who are represented by my colleague and myself, I will state that we hope much good may result from this discussion, to pupils, teachers, and the cause of education in our city. And if anything has been said which would seem to indicate that we are not satisfied with the Superintendents, or the grades, we ask that it be not considered as emanating from dissatisfaction among the Vice Principals, but rather from an earnest desire, when the opportunity was extended to them, to lay before you, gentlemen, such facts as their observation and experience have shown were open to improvements.

These are the unanimous expressions of the Vice-Principals' Association from which I am delegated, and, in conclusion, I will state that they are willing to trust their reputations to the gentlemen who have summoned us here to-night at all times, and have unwavering confidence in the Superintendents whose province it is to examine the classes confided to their charge.

The CHAIRMAN then announced that the Committee would adjourn to Monday, May 11th, at 5 o'clock, for further discussion.

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## SECOND SESSION.

The Committee met pursuant to adjournment, on Monday, May 11th, 1868. Present, Commissioners Merrill, (*Chairman*,) Dupignac, Hall, Neilson, West, Durvea, Warren and Euring.

The Chairman announced that Mr. Hugh Carlisle, of Grammar School No. 48, would continue the discussion on behalf of the Vice-Principals of the Male Departments.

Mr. CARLISLE then addressed the Committee as follows:—

MR. CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN OF THE COMMITTEE—At the hour you adjourned your last meeting, the discussion of the questions submitted in your circular had arrived at the fourth resolution of the series adopted by the Vice-Principals of the Male Grammar Schools. With your permission I shall now read that resolution.

*“Resolved, That in examinations by the Superintendent, no teacher or class ought to be held responsible for the studies of a preceding grade.”*

This resolution, in substance, and very nearly in language, is coincident with one of the series passed by the Male Principals. Such consent in judgment upon a question growing out of a common experience, if not “confirmation strong,” may at least be allowed some weight in determining the sufficiency of the grounds upon which the proposition is founded. The question presented in this resolution was so well discussed at the last meeting, that if you allow me to recapitulate some of the arguments then brought forward, I shall have fully stated my own. It was at that time urged that while the class that occupies an advanced place in studies like arithmetic, for instance, in which principles and processes as they are developed become agents in the development of succeeding principles and processes, and in which the understanding of one part necessitates a clear conception of preceeding parts, that class may rightfully be held re-

sponsible for the whole ground that has been gone over. But in studies like geography, where a knowledge of Europe might well consist with comparative or entire ignorance of North America, or like history, in which acquaintance with one period need not pre-suppose acquaintance with an earlier period—studies in which the parts so loosely cohere that there is no violence done in dividing them anywhere—no teacher or class should be held to such responsibility. How much at variance, too, is it with our knowledge of the actings of the human mind, to think that because scholars may produce on demand what they have once learned, that they have derived no benefit from the study of it, or for the same reason to assume that it has even escaped from the custody of their memory? A minute comparison was made in your hearing, but for a different use, between the extent of ground to be gone over every week in the studies of the three highest grades, and the amount of time necessary to traverse that ground, that can be wrenched from the week as it flies. I shall take the liberty of applying that argument, without going into its minutiae, to the point in hand. I shall take the fact which Mr. Kennard adduced, namely, that all the time that can be got for teaching, divided by the number of studies in the grade, gives an hour and thirty-seven minutes a week for each particular study—an estimate, I may remark, which would add about three hours per week to the calendar of some teachers; time which, if they could only obtain it, could no doubt be profitably spent in reviews. I shall take that average hour and thirty-seven minutes, and ask you to double it for reading and for grammar, and for arithmetic, yes, to treble it, perhaps, for the algebra that precedes, not by stages, but begins at the beginning and goes in a single grade as far as it is required to go; and do all this at the expense of geography, and history, and the Constitution, and astronomy, and book-keeping; and last, but by no means least, at the expense of composition, and then say how much of the twenty-two hours is left—it can be set down in figures—how much is left after doing your own work, to do over again the work of another in a lower grade. Do you begin to realize the agonizing of the teacher to accomplish the whole work by the end of the allotted year? If the day is not long enough for the studies proper to the grade, what



degree of energy would enable a teacher to force his way through the studies that lie before him, and at the same time to make reprisals in the territory that may have been abandoned behind him. But it may be objected, that the time that may be taken for the accomplishment of a grade is not limited except in the teacher's favor. No one, it may be said, can demand that he shall do the work in less than a year, and, in the words of the by-law itself, he "shall occupy a period of one school year, or more, as may be necessary." But this objection is not ingenuous. What school, much less what teacher, could afford to take more than may be necessary? No, "necessity is laid upon him, and woe is unto him" if he do not make a finish in the ten or eleven months that everybody else does it in. The circumstances of the case—those invisible but ever present Shylocks—are as inexorable in their demands, as if a year, no more, were prescribed in every letter of the by-law.

There is another aspect of the case. Think of a thorough-going class, after a year's strenuous exertions, and with the confidence they have a right to feel on their own ground, tripped up at the outset of the examination by the mere accident of a few hap-hazard questions on some subject of the kind we are considering. Now think also of the disheartening effect of such an event upon spirited scholars, and the wrong done to them and to a devoted and faithful teacher, who, it might have been, was depending upon his first examination for a good name, depriving them, not of the sustaining sense of having done their utmost, but taking from them the credit they had earned by diligent work. This is reason enough without another besides, for making such a change in the course of studies as would prevent such a thing from ever taking place. Besides, it is not necessary to know that such a condemnation of a teacher ever did occur. It is enough to know that it might do so, and that if it has not many times happened, it is due to the right feeling of the Superintendents as to what is reasonable and just under the circumstances. It is enough that the by-laws regulating the subject of studies and examinations admit its possibility, and actually in terms lay down in several distinct places. (Sec. 88, p. 125, Sec. 87, Sec. 85, p. 124, taken, of course, in connection, as they must be with extent of the reviews and vagueness of the outlines pre-



scribed in each grade). Yet I think that the difficulties involved in reviews will best be corrected, not by sweeping them away, but by definitely naming the particular things which shall be taken up in any study. Such are the reasons, which on behalf of the Male Vice-Principals, I use in support of their resolution, to the effect that no teacher in an examination should be held responsible for the studies of a preceding grade.

The next resolution is as follows :

“*Resolved*, That we do not recommend, so far as the three highest grades are concerned, any change in the maximum number of hours allowed for home study.”

It might appear, at first sight, a very obvious way of lessening the amount and arduousness of the labors of teachers and scholars, and by that means of allaying the present dissatisfaction of parents of children that attend the Public Schools, and of many others interested in public education in this city, and preventing the recurrence of such complaints as are alleged in the preamble to the resolution appointing your Committee to relieve the scholars entirely of home study. You might do this at once by taking away the leave granted to teachers by Sec. 89 of the by-laws, of giving lessons to be learned out of school. And this really was the way in which relief was afforded about this time last year to the pupils of the two higher classes in the Primary Departments, which, with respect to the teachers, and with respect to the scholars, too, as Miss McCloskey affirmed at the last meeting, it was, to use a simile already employed by Mr. Hunter, a repetition of the old Egyptian task of demanding the full tale of bricks, yet compelling the makers to find their own straw. The resolution of the Board of Education, recalling the books that were in the hands of these Primary children, rendered in metaphor, would be the literal order of Pharaoh, “Go ye, get you straw where you can find it, yet not aught of your work shall be diminished.” Nothing of all that had been previously required by the course of studies for the departments was omitted, except some of the facilities for performing the work.

The by-laws humanely prohibited for years the giving of out-of-school lessons to Primary scholars. But as long as textbooks were allowed to be taken home, such lessons were given, and in the meantime, geography, which had been dropped from

the grade, was restored to its place again, and, when the home lessons were effectually precluded, by taking away the books, geography was still retained. Thus, while with the best of intentions to relieve those children, this action really added to the burden both of teachers and pupils.

The Vice-Principals, however, wish to say nothing here with respect to other grades than their own. Individually, their opinions on the general subject of text-books and home study may be as diverse as are the opinions evidently of the other classes of teachers represented here. At the last meeting, Mr. Scott thought that in Male Grammar Schools, except in the matter of reviews, the energies of the pupils were not overtaken, and in his own school, where, as in other grammar departments, I presume some lessons are given to be learned at home, there was not too much work required. Mr. Hunter characterized home study as a good deal of a farce, particularly in the lower classes, while the Principals of the Primary Departments recommended its restoration to the classes where it was formerly in use. Deprecating so hazardous and untried an experiment as the attempt to achieve, within the four walls of a class-room, the amount of work involved in the completion of an entire grade such as either of the three highest, and without the aid of any further labor on the part of the pupils than what they bestow under the immediate guidance of the teacher, the Vice-Principals have felt it to be their duty to endeavor to avert what they consider would be so adverse to the interests of the schools, and particularly of the teachers and scholars of the three upper grades in male departments, as any measure annulling the provision for home study, as now applied to those grades. I would ask your attention to one or two remarks I have to make in support of this view.

The amount of daily study necessary to complete in a year any one of the three highest grades requires more time than can be obtained during the hours spent in school. The argument drawn from the extent of ground to be gone over, and the length of time we must do it in, is a sheet anchor, and I employ it again. Not being a mere matter of opinion, not a thing of invention, but drawn from the every-day experience of the teacher, it is unanswerable. A teacher must count off his time by minutes, and husband every one of them, if he would get

through his work, and give a due share of his attention, no more no less, to every part of it. Before I heard Mr. Kennard's analysis of his time, I had already prepared one from my own daily work. Leaving out three hours and a-half per week for special studies, five hours for recesses, and twenty minutes a day for the morning exercises, and ten minutes a day to write the next day's lessons on the board, and whatever else may have to be done before dismissing, nineteen hours out of the thirty is all that the closest economy can save for actual teaching. This would admit a scale, for thirteen studies, of from three hours to fifteen minutes a week for each study more or less important, a programme which I think the experience of most teachers will allow to be in general practicable. It certainly turns every moment to account, for four lessons a week, of three-quarters of an hour each for the most important studies, may be displayed on many a class bulletin or order of exercises, but it often remains there, more an object of desire than of actual enjoyment.

Let us try this estimate, however, and see how it will accomplish the year's work. We might take geometry as a type of the most exacting of the studies, and one at the same time very convenient for dividing into lessons. If we use Docharty's Geometry for a text-book, and it furnishes a very concise arrangement of the subject—besides the definitions covering about ten pages, there are in the ground prescribed for the First Supplementary Course 170 distinct propositions. The school year embraces about 215 days. Four lessons a week is a lesson a day for four-fifths of all the days in the school year, or 172 lessons, or a proposition of geometry for each lesson; and this when the study is first taken up, and allowing for the average ability of the class and for reviews, is about as much as could be done thoroughly, thus completing the subject in the allotted time. Now, what about the labor necessary to effect this? The ancient method of training in the Public Schools by handing a boy a geometry, with directions to learn half the *first book*, and perhaps allowing *another boy* to hear the lesson for you, is gone by. The teacher, we suppose, is ready for the lesson. He has just 45 minutes, or he encroaches on his other work. Suppose that half an hour is used in the most expeditious way in testing the competency of the class in the lesson. He has then fifteen minutes left for analyz-

ing, on the blackboard, the method of proof used for the demonstration of the proposition or propositions intended for the next lesson, and for ascertaining by questions, as he goes along, whether his pupils comprehend his explanation; and, at the end of his 45 minutes, he is ready to leave the lesson for them to reproduce, on the next occasion, his analysis, as well as the demonstration of the book, or their own, as the case may be. Now, suppose there was to be no further study of this lesson than the fifteen minutes explanation we have just witnessed, how many of the scholars would be able to go through with their lesson by the time the next hour for geometry rolled round?

There was the true preparation made in that analysis to enable them to study to purpose; but without provision made for such study as is necessary in order to bring up clearly their own conception of the subject, the labors of the teacher will be found to be barren of any available result, except, perhaps, with a few superior minds in the class. Studies like arithmetic, algebra, and book-keeping, and even grammar, can well be satisfied with the instruction of the school-room; but studies like geometry, when you consider the extent and strangeness of the subject to beginners, as well as the fixed and continuous attention it requires to get a lesson, you must assent to the necessity for assiduous study out of school, in order at all to profit by the lessons given in school.

Such subjects as this must have for the student, in the act of studying, the seclusion which he can only find at home. It is of the nature of all reasoning to require the closest attention. Our attention is required but for a moment to perceive the relation between two facts when it is apparent to the senses. But when the relation that links these facts together is so obscure that it has to be traced by means of other relations, it becomes more difficult, and the attention must be continued, it may be, for a long time together. So it is with geometry. "All or none" is the demand it makes upon the attention. If a single step is missed, in following out a demonstration, the mind must return to where it was when the attention was drawn aside. Indeed, if a pupil could become an adept in every other of the studies of these grades solely by what he gains in the common efforts of his class, geometry would remain the one exception to

the rule, and he would have to isolate himself from his companions during the time of study, if he would succeed in acquiring any considerable knowledge of it.

But the physical and mental ability of the pupils who are engaged in the highest grades is adequate to all the work that can be given them, both in school and at home, within the time allowed by the by-laws regulating that subject. Boys of 15 or 16 scarcely know fatigue. Enlist them with a sufficient motive and they will do anything you ask, and still have energy in reserve for the next demand. They are now as well able to perform a long day's work as they will be when they have actually to leave school to follow some business avocation. They have reached a period of life, when, with scarcely another duty super-added upon those of their own childhood, a force, both of body and mind, has been accumulated which will find scope only in the occupations of manhood. The need of economizing this surplus force, both for their intellectual and moral advantage, is acknowledged in the fact, that in school systems in other places which provide an immunity from lessons out of school to certain classes of pupils in consideration of youth or sex, with respect to the higher classes of boys the only restriction is upon the length of time such lessons may occupy. It is so in Boston; no out-of-school lessons are assigned to the children in the primary departments, or to the girls of the grammar schools—but to the boys of the grammar schools—only limited, as I say, in the length of time to be taken for them.

What are some of the advantages of out-of-school lessons? Liberty to appoint home lessons would afford the teacher a constant opportunity for employing that kind of discipline by which mainly scholars of that age must be controlled. Boys of this age are allowed a greater range of discretion than when they were younger. Whatever authority is exercised over them must be brought to bear, not so directly as heretofore, but by the intervention of motives. Let the habit begin to be formed of feeling that they must devote their own time to duty, which, if they postpone, they themselves will be the losers. Let them feel that whereas they have been children, understanding as children, and thinking as children, that now that they are becoming men they must begin to do the work of men. It is a necessity, too,



at this period of life never to let the mind go unoccupied. Let there be no such thing as leisure time. Give them enough work in school to make them enjoy play when they get out; and before they have become tired of play, and begun to feel the want of something to do, let the hour come for the preparation of lessons, peremptorily demanded on the next day. They leave school at three o'clock. They have then several hours of daylight for recreation. Make it imperative that part of the evening shall be given to study, and fewer boys will be found at night beyond the reach of wholesome restraint.

Home study will foster self-reliance. One of the cardinal principles of teaching is to do nothing for the scholar that he can be made to do for himself. The difficulties of any case will not appear to him with half their vividness, unless they are allowed to rise in his path of themselves and unsuggested. If they are pointed out beforehand, he will be more apt to wait for assistance than to proceed himself, relying upon his own ingenuity and skill to engineer his way through. The moment help is given, his mind loses its alertness, and if he does get at the solution of what was proposed, it is with the loss of all the pleasure. Could he have been left to his own resources, he might have discovered how easy sometimes a thing becomes when it must be done, and how a way will rise to his feet when he sets himself to prosecute it. Let work then be provided to be done at home. Let it be as much as possible in application of what has been taught. Let it be not so difficult but that with reasonable effort and in a reasonable time it can be accomplished, and let it be of a kind to encourage original thinking. Put such a high tariff on foreign ready-made goods as to compel resort to home manufacture.

Another advantage: Home study on the part of the scholar will necessitate home study on the part of the teacher. Each is the complement of the other.

If the teacher fulfill his duty with respect to his scholars, it will be only by diligent and constant study on his part. Should he make careful and exact preparation for each succeeding lesson, laying all his reading and intercourse with others under contribution to illustrate it, he would be repaid in innumerable ways for all his labor, both as respects his own improvement



and that of his class. He knows how to exercise the minds of his scholars in the various mental operations he went through with himself. He knows the kind of work to give them for calling out their best efforts at home, and the results they bring will often give him material for teaching and compel him to further preparation. His influence over them would be multiplied a hundred fold. And yet if all this, and more than this, will fail in reaching many of his class at this critical period of life, how necessary that no means should be dropped out of use which have been proved efficient in most cases?

Before reading the next resolution I wish to say that one of the charges which the Vice-Principals considered very important was the placing of book-keeping among the studies of the first grade.

This is advisable, because, unless a class has reached one of the supplementary grades, they cannot make book-keeping one of their studies. Besides, in a number of the schools, from various causes, such as locality, &c., it is next to impossible—it is impossible to keep a sufficient number of scholars long enough to form a supplementary class. It is, however, in the highest classes of such schools that many boys must obtain what education they get to fit them for their future calling, and many boys are compelled to leave school before they have got beyond the first grade, to whom a knowledge of book-keeping, of which they are deprived by the present arrangement, would, in many cases, be of very great service to them, not only in obtaining places, but in fulfilling their duties when they have obtained them.

The last resolution is as follows :

*“Resolved,* That whereas we consider an equitable marking system a protection to the good teacher, we recommend the substitution of adjectives of degree in place of the present method.”

This resolution is specific. The system which is recommended is the one which was adopted by the Superintendents when they laid aside their first system of marking by numerals. Why they afterwards replaced it with another system of numerals I do not know. But every one does know that while it was in use, notwithstanding the fact that it had been devised to obviate the

objections made against the employment of numerals, the Superintendents used to be besieged by teachers the moment the examination of their class was ended, to learn, not the epithet he had awarded—they would not be satisfied with that—but the arithmetical result of the calculation by which the epithet was determined. They must have the figures. This may explain the abandonment of the plan. Yet the figures continued to be objected to—and with just grounds, as most must think.

Any plan that professes to lay down, as by a hair's breadth, the distinction between the qualifications of one class or school and those of another, and have the effect of defining with the same precision the comparative ability and standing of their teachers, is invidious; its direct tendency is to beget a feeling the most deleterious that can find place in the mind. Some way of acknowledging the merits of efficient teachers and of taking cognizance of the inefficiency of others is essential to the prosperity of the schools. There is none, however, that ought to attempt to do this, except in a general way. There is none that do not require the utmost circumspection on the part of the examiner. And here I can but repeat in substance what was said at last meeting, that if any evil has resulted from any of the systems that have been used, it has been in consequence of what was inherent in the system, and not in the mode of conducting the examination, or of any intention on the part of the Superintendents. I can but express the same respect for men who have had it as a part of their daily duty to employ an instrument capable of so much harm, and who have for years so used it as to have lost no jot of the reputation for fairness which they obtained when they entered upon their office, and to retain to this day the confidence of those who would have been most affected by a wrong judgment.

The plan recommended in the resolution is open to the fewest objections of any that, so far as we know, can be used. With these words, Mr. Chairman, we leave this matter in your hands.

To determine a course of studies which shall be most in accordance with the order of development of the faculties of the mind; which shall have respect to the various avocations of life, and not only so, but also to the moral character of those who

are to engage in those avocations : to determine this, and to do it in such a manner as that the labor to be undergone both by teachers and scholars shall be commensurate with the importance of the objects proposed, and yet be not a burden too grievous to be borne, is a task the difficulty of which can best be realized when we consider that with the experience of all who have lived and died before us, it is now, at the present time, the question which more than any other is occupying the minds of educators. This, no doubt, Mr. Chairman, was the object had in view by the Board of Education when they entrusted your Committee with the inquiry you are now carrying on.

When you have recast the studies of the course, and the time to be spent upon them, there still remains for consideration, if they cannot be definitely prescribed, What are the best methods of teaching? The studies, as they will be pursued in our schools and colleges in future, appear now as if they were falling into line spontaneously in a way adapted to the human mind. But as to the best methods by which education can be carried out, as long as one teacher succeed best by one method and another by a different one, there will always be just as much diversity of opinion and practice as ever. But if, along with the result of your deliberation respecting an amended course of studies, you should make available to all the teachers of the Public Schools in this city by information on the subject, to which no doubt you have access, the various methods of instruction to which may be ascribed the superior excellence of the school system of any one country over that of another, as of Prussia, for instance, of the popular education of which country completeness and culture are said to be the characteristics, you would confer a benefit upon the city of New York which would be felt in all her interests.

Mr. FREDERICK W. JAMES, of Grammar School No. 17, as representative of the male assistant teachers, then addressed the Committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN OF THE COMMITTEE :

In obedience to your request, the male assistants respectfully present for your impartial consideration, the following objec-

tions to the present course of study. In the first place, it is too indefinite in its requirements. This defect is especially apparent in spelling, geography and oral instruction. In the first branch, throughout the entire seven grades, miscellaneous words are required, in addition to the large number found in the reading lesson. Webster defines the word "miscellaneous" as "mixed," an unfortunate condition in which many teachers find themselves while endeavoring to impart instruction according to the present requirements. As long as reading books, containing six hundred pages, and weighing one pound nine ounces, are used in many of our first grade classes, we respectfully submit, that a correct knowledge of the words and definitions contained in a volume of the above description, should be sufficient to demonstrate the thoroughness with which a class has been instructed, without resorting to "miscellaneous" words. If Webster's Unabridged Dictionary was in use as a text book for pupils, there might be some reason for an unlimited number of miscellaneous words to be given at examinations. If they must be given, would it not be better to have some limit for each grade? For example, certain grades might be required to be familiar with monosyllables, other grades with dissyllables, and so on. A teacher would then have some idea of the requirements in this branch at least.

In the seventh grade, primary geography is specified; in the sixth, outlines; in the fourth, general features; in the third, a full knowledge of North America and its divisions; and so on until we arrive at the first grade, when a general review is demanded. We acknowledge, in company with our predecessors, our inability to define the extent of the term "outline." The same objection exists in regard to "general features." That which one might deem a general feature, another would not. One examiner might with propriety deem the city of New York as a proper subject for a question; another might think Bridgeport, which ranks as the 78th city in the United States, a proper one also; the Dwina River, which ranks as the 19th river of Europe, still another. Would it not be better to specify in a more definite manner the amount of work required in each grade? Let the teachers know that the largest five, ten or fifteen cities, rivers, capes, &c., of a country are sufficient, and they will then pos-

sess some idea of what amount of ground to go over. In oral instruction, young children just promoted from the Primary Department are required to be proficient in the qualities and uses of familiar objects, such as articles of clothing, food, and materials for building. It would be no easy task for you, gentlemen, to describe the qualities (to say nothing of the uses) of many articles of clothing now before you; still, a child in the seventh grade is expected to possess a knowledge of these subjects. In the sixth grade an outline knowledge of animals is required. What animals? Will the dog, horse, cow, &c., be sufficient, or must the animal kingdom, from the ant to the elephant, including the cynocephalus, be taught? In the first grade pupils must understand commerce, and be taught the current events of general interest as recorded in the periodicals of the day. As the last current event of general importance is the Impeachment Trial, we presume that teachers with classes of the first grade have their hands full on this one subject. We do not condemn "Oral Instruction," but simply ask that some limit may be placed upon it. Another objection to the present course is that it requires too much time to be devoted to studies that develop the memory only. Especially is this defect noticeable in geography and history; the former branch is taught in the entire seven grades, the latter in the highest four. As any information in regard to either of these branches can be obtained in a few moments from an encyclopædia or atlas, it seems to us that the time could be occupied to better advantage (after the fundamental and important points have been mastered), by pursuing other branches that tend to develop the reasoning faculties to a greater extent.

Another objection to the present course is the frequent and searching reviews required. No one will deny that, in order to instruct a class of pupils successfully in some branches, a teacher must and will resort to review; take the study of arithmetic, for example: any intelligent teacher knows that before a pupil can comprehend profit and loss, or interest, he, the pupil, must understand the principles of percentage; and if these principles are not thoroughly mastered, no intelligent progress can be made until this ground has been reviewed. But allow us to call



your attention to other branches. Take the subject of history : What connection has the settlement of Virginia with the battle of Trenton ? Or the defeat of Braddock with the evacuation of New York ? Why require a pupil of the first grade to review the colonial history of our country ? Is it necessary for him to possess a knowledge of the French and Indian War in order to understand the War of 1812 ? In geography, what connection has the Hudson River with the Volga, or the city of Paris with Cape Horn ? Must a pupil be proficient in North America before he can study the map of Europe ?

The first grade calls for a general review of the whole subject. In order to ascertain the amount of work a teacher must go over to give his pupils a general review, we have calculated the number of questions laid down in one of the geographical text-books. The result is as follows : Isthmuses 7, deserts 19, peninsulas 26, straits 62, mountain ranges 92, lakes 104, peaks 124, seas, gulfs and bays 142, capes 154, capitals 194, islands 214, rivers 318—making a grand total of 1,456 questions in this single subject of “General Review.”

It may be said that pupils are not required to know *all* these questions. Admitting that only one-tenth part is given at examinations, which tenth part of the 1,456 is the teacher to select ? Our geographies contain many insignificant questions that are of no earthly use, such as volcanic islands, which are frequently wiped out of existence. A teacher has not the time to go through a lesson, and point out the proper and improper questions to study ; hence the pupil must commit all to memory or discard the book entirely. If geography can be taught by outline maps, then no necessity exists for a text-book. If, on the other hand, a book is needed, and we think it is, we respectfully ask that the pupils shall be furnished one that will be of more practical use to them. While review, under different circumstances, may be right and proper, we submit that under the present regulations it is unjust to the teacher. It is holding one responsible for the shortcomings of another. The higher the grade the more review required, so that the Vice-Principal instructs his class in the 14 studies of his own grade, and then, by way of variety, reviews the work done in all the other classes. If promotions have been properly made, the pupils understand



the subjects they have gone over; if promotions have not been judiciously made, why hold the class teacher responsible for something over which he has no control? We therefore submit that no teacher should be held responsible for any grade excepting the one taught by himself. If a teacher has a class given him that has completed the third grade, and he undertakes to instruct these pupils in the second grade, then examine that class in the second grade, and let said teacher's reputation stand or fall on what he has himself accomplished.

If an examination in reviewed studies is desired, let it be made separate and distinct from that portion of the course assigned to the teacher's class. The present system of marking the results of the examinations tends to produce a pressure on teachers and pupils which is injurious to both. It is a well-known fact, that, under the present system, a teacher's reputation depends, in a great measure, upon his ability to obtain a high percentage of the maximum of marks given at the examination. School officers, consult these results; the figures have been published (we do not say by the authority or consent of the Superintendents) in the newspapers. Teachers are often appointed to important positions, provided they can obtain 85, 90, or 95 per cent. These marks do not always prove to be infallible recommendations. In some instances teachers have been unsuccessful notwithstanding they have received a high mark.

It sometimes happens that if one teacher excels another by one or even a half per cent., the successful one is apt to imagine himself the superior teacher; perhaps he is to the extent of one-half per cent. Pupils of a class that happened to obtain  $90\frac{1}{2}$  are apt to look with a kind of contempt upon both teacher and pupils of that class which obtained but  $89\frac{1}{2}$ , and the respect for that teacher which all the pupils of a department should manifest is diminished by this circumstance. It is almost impossible to mark all classes according to the same standard. In some localities a large portion of the children frequently attend religious services; in other neighborhoods the children are of a poorer class, and are frequently detained at home to aid their parents. Again, the size of the class should be taken into consideration. In some schools, classes in the second grade have an attendance of twenty-five or thirty pupils; in others the same grade class

will have forty-five or fifty in attendance daily. In some of the classes of the Grammar Schools seventy-five or eighty pupils are under the care of one teacher. Is it reasonable to expect a teacher with a class of seventy-five to accomplish the same amount of work, or even half of it, as well as one whose class numbers but thirty? In a late Annual Report one of the Superintendents said, in regard to this subject:

"My experience indicates that the number of scholars in a single class should not exceed forty."

If this judgment is correct, is it not fair that where classes are found to contain more than this number, that this fact should be taken into consideration? At the last examination, 110 classes out of the 1,425 examined failed to obtain 75 per cent. It is not at all improbable that from these classes promotions were made, although the pupils were pronounced deficient, and yet, under the present system, the new teacher is held accountable for this deficiency.

The Superintendent, in speaking of the marks obtained at the examinations, says:

"Should such average percentage fall *below seventy-five*, the result would be regarded, in the absence of sufficient explanations, as unsatisfactory; and whenever the records of the Department show a repetition of such results for two or more successive examinations, it will be regarded, in accordance with the decision of the State Superintendent, and the sanction of the Board of Education, as sufficient cause for the revocation of the certificates of qualification held by the teacher, on the ground of practical incompetency and inefficiency, or for the recommendation to the Board of Education of his or her removal."

And one of the reasons given why this course should be taken is:

"In view of the liberal compensation now paid to teachers of every grade, and of the ample facilities afforded them for the faithful discharge of their duties, there can be no sufficient justification for the retaining in the employ of the Board such of their number as find themselves unable, after *repeated* examinations, based on their *own* reports of the condition of their classes, to attain an average of seventy-five per cent."

The first reason in regard to the liberal compensation is a question upon which there is a great diversity of opinion; but as

it is not one of the topics under consideration we pass it with the mere notice, that at some future time should your Honorable Board desire it, we will endeavor to show that there are two sides to this question. The suggestion made in regard to the use of adjectives in marking the results, has many objectionable features also. From ten to twenty words may be used that would denote every shade of quality. The result of every examination must be one of two things, either satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Is not this sufficient for all practical purposes?

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, we desire to express our appreciation of the consideration shown by your honorable body in allowing the assistant teachers to express their views on this important subject. We have endeavored to do so in a spirit of good feeling and with a sincere desire to represent the facts in their true light, as they appear to us. We acknowledge our inability, in a measure, to exercise the same mature judgment as our worthy superiors; nevertheless, our opinions, which we submit with diffidence, are the result of many years experience, and we give them with a firm belief in their truthfulness. If anything has been said that would seem to reflect unfavorably on a single person interested in this matter, we ask to be acquitted of any intentional desire to accomplish this result. And now, gentlemen, having very imperfectly endeavored to perform our duty, we respectfully submit our conclusions, in the hope that much good will be derived from this friendly discussion, and that our noble institutions of public education may be made the means of bestowing greater advantages and blessings upon the youth of our beloved country.

Mr. HENRY T. CARROLL, of Grammar School No. 1, continued, on behalf of the male assistant teachers, as follows:

MR. CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN OF THE COMMITTEE,—

I do not this evening propose to delay your time in talking of matters that have been ably handled by those who have preceded me. Suffice it to say, that the assistant teachers, at their meeting, have given ideas to the delegates which have been already spoken of by the Principals and Vice-Principals who have taken this floor previously—especially so, in reference to the “words,” outlines and reviews.

It appears to me, from the drift of the communications and speeches placed before this body, that a great deal of blame is placed upon the shoulders of the Superintendents, in reference to the course of studies. The Principals say, and others also, that they do not believe the Superintendents to be immaculate. I hope you will allow us to say, as assistant teachers, that in the conduct of the Schools, we do not exactly believe that all Principals are immaculate.

One of the greatest evils that assistant teachers have to fight against, is the very imperfect manner in which some promotions are made. For instance, Mr. Vice-Principal sends 35 or 40 boys to the College. The teacher below is informed that that class must be made up. Here are 35 to 40 vacant seats. "You will be kind enough to prepare that number of your best scholars, and have them sent here." Mr. First Assistant is requested to do the same, and so on; the promotions will run to the end. And very strange, indeed, the Principals are anxious to obtain a very large promotion, for reasons that are probably best known to themselves. Another thing that we must complain of, as assistant teachers, is the conflict between Superintendents and Principals. Our Superintendents tell us that "we do not wish you to go over a great amount of work and do it imperfectly; we wish you only to go over an amount that you think you can prepare yourself and your class for properly." The Principals tell us: "Mr. Teacher—the class above you is in the first grade. I am expected to promote a class from you next time—to promote those who are able to enter the first grade." This is also carried to the end of the department. And the assistant teacher is thrown between two fires. The Superintendents tell us that the work we perform we must do well. They mark us according to our own reports. Our Principals tell us we must prepare our classes to enter the grade or class that is above us. If we disoblige either, I am afraid that a soft word is not generally given to us.

The assistant teachers, at their meeting, adopted a series of resolutions. I have been led to understand that a part of the resolutions that we have, are in reference to corporal punishment, and that these are for the present foreign to the subject. Not being notified myself, or informed of the matter officially, I

take this occasion of stating this, and as it is against the wishes of the Committee, that part I will not read.

Another of the resolutions adopted by the assistant teachers is the following :

*Resolved*, That one of the greatest obstacles to success in teaching our respective classes, is the very imperfect manner in which promotions and admissions are made."

In reference to the admission of scholars to classes, many of the assistant teachers have given cases to us. Here a scholar had sought admission to the school. The Principal would ask him what school he had previously attended. When he was informed of this and of what class he had attended, he would be brought to the corresponding class in the school at which he applied. The Principal then tells the assistant, "Take this boy to your class and give him a trial for two or three days." This done, the assistant brings the boy to the Principal, and informs him that the boy is not capable of keeping up with the class. The Principal says, "You have not given him time enough; no person can judge of the capacity of a scholar in three or four days; try him again—a week, or longer!" A week's time is given, and the boy at the end of the week comes out with the same result. He is brought to the Principal, who, when told the result of the trial, says: "Well, I am afraid if we take the books away from that boy, and put him into a lower class, that we will lose him as a scholar, and it is absolutely necessary that we should have a large average attendance this year."

Another of the resolutions adopted by the assistant teachers is this :

*Resolved*, That no pupil should be admitted or promoted to a class, who at the time of such admission or promotion is not thoroughly qualified, and that any pupil whose average standing and scholarship are indicated by the class record as less than 80 per cent., should be deemed unqualified for promotion."

We deemed, as assistants, that the examination by the Superintendent or Principals alone is not a criterion of the qualifications of a scholar. We, as assistants, think that we should at least see or participate in the examination of pupils for our classes. I am very happy to state, that as far as my school is concerned, that privilege is allowed us partially; but I am talk-



ing for the assistants—not for myself. They state that it is their belief that a scholar should have at least an average standing, omitting conduct, of eighty per cent. We find that, from the examination by the Principals and also by the Superintendents, our dullest boys, at times, will appear to be ornaments in a class, and that those that we have had our ideas or minds placed upon as scholars who would do well for us when the Superintendents or Principals should examine them, by some means or other—probably by confusion—will appear to be the dullest; and for that reason, we believe that the examination by Superintendents or Principals is no criterion to show the standing of the boys that are to be promoted. We would then ask the privilege of examining the class record of the boy, and we are willing to take all chances, if they give us the privilege of selecting the 80 per cent. scholars.

The assistants also adopted the following:

*Resolved*, That no teacher should be held responsible for the studies of a lower class, and that the course of studies should be so revised, as to state in a more precise manner the exact extent of study required of the several pupils in the several grades."

Enough has been said of that already, but perhaps a few words might be necessary in reference to the latter part of this resolution, "that the course of studies should be so revised, as to state in a more precise manner the exact extent of study required of the several pupils in the several grades."

In the arithmetics that we have as text-books in the schools, I know of no two authors that place their rules in the same position in the book. One author will place "profit and loss" before "interest;" another author "interest" before "profit and loss." I have examined a few of the arithmetics that are in the school I am engaged in, and I find seven different text-books. There are seven different ways of placing the rules, and if we choose or select either of those text-books as the book for our class according to the form of rules by which the Superintendents state the amount of examination in arithmetic, I fear some of us will neglect rules that the Superintendents have placed in their diaries as the regular rules to be examined in. We would, therefore, ask, that the Superintendents express in their course of studies to the Board of Education the exact work a class should do.

We adopted also the following resolution:

*Resolved*, That whereas it is a great object of education to develop the mind, and train it to habits of close and correct thinking, and in our opinion the present system has too great a tendency to store the mind with facts only and not to draw out the reasoning power of faculties, therefore be it resolved, that more attention should be paid to those studies that require logical reasoning, and less attention to those that require mere memorising."

We find, in reference to the study of analysis in grammar, boys who will take a sentence and tear it to pieces; cut it up into mincemeat, according to the new principles of analyzing; but if we ask the self-same scholars to make a sentence of their own, we will find them at sea. There are lessons in other branches spoken of before that are given as examples of the same kind, but it is not necessary to delay your time on that matter any longer.

"*Resolved*, That the objection to the system of marking now used by Superintendents in examining classes, etc., tends to produce a pressure on teacher and scholar which is highly injurious to both."

Enough has been said on this subject already.

Now, Mr. Chairman, a few words in reference to the districts—the localities in which schools are placed.

By the examinations of the Superintendents I believe that all sections of the city of New York are treated alike. Now, sir, if teachers in certain parts of the city of New York, where they are favored by circumstances, can complain of the course of study and the amount of work they have to perform, how much more right have the teachers of the lower districts of the city of New York, where the poorer classes are located, to complain of the work *they* must perform? In some of the schools and grades in the city of New York there are three classes in a grade. Now, sir, there are other schools which have but one class in a grade, and as much is expected of that one teacher as is expected from a school where there are three teachers in a grade. We consider this unjust. The district that I am located in myself is a district wherein when a boy has arrived at the age of thirteen or fourteen years his parents will take him from school and send him to work. Now, sir, we are expected to take the little

children that have been forced up with the intention of filling up higher classes, for the purpose of giving a certain grade to a school—and when the examiners come around, we are forced to present as favorable a class as a school of three hundred, five hundred, or six hundred scholars. This, we think, should not be so. We are of the opinion—not that we object to the style of marking—the way in which they should judge of the capabilities of a teacher would be to take into consideration the locality, the district, and the circumstances in which the teacher is placed, with reference to keeping up his attendance in his class. I think the trouble would leave the shoulders of the teachers of that district, and that we could carry our schools with as much honor through the educational system that you have marked out for us as the schools where they have five hundred scholars, and obtain very high percentages at the examinations by Superintendents.

I do not know, sir, that I have any other matters to speak on this evening. I had prepared myself to say a few words in reference to the subject that you have passed from your deliberations on this occasion, and I think that the subject, as far as the assistant teachers are concerned, has been placed before you in a proper light by the gentleman who has preceded me, Mr. James, and that further remarks, on my part, would probably carry away the effect that may have been made. Suffice it to say, as far as I am concerned, and also for the assistant teachers that I represent, we feel, as this is the first time that the humble assistants have been called on to speak for themselves, it may be their last, and that we think we are justified in speaking our mind in this matter, and that if we have dropped any assertions that are not acceptable to all present, we would most humbly apologize. I thank you, gentlemen, for the attention you have given me.

MISS ABBY BEALE, Principal of the Primary Department in Grammar School No. 11, then spoke as follows :

In the first place we desire to say that we are perfectly satisfied with the present grade. We do not think the children in the Primary Department are overtasked in their studies ; at least there is constant care taken (by frequent change of subject, exer-

cise, &c.) that they shall not become weary of any one thing. The teachers *are* overworked. Mrs. McCloskey spoke of the frequent transfer of teachers from one department to another as one great cause of the overworking of those who remain—their places being usually supplied by graduates from the Grammar Department, not only wholly inexperienced in the art of governing and teaching the little ones committed to their care, but generally quite incapable of understanding their many wants beside, thus proving a serious injury to the children as well. I can speak feelingly on this subject, having taken eight graduates in one year into my own school. Now, all this may be easily obviated by what *we* regard as a simple act of justice. That there should be as good and experienced teachers in the Primary as in the Grammar Department, I think none will deny who have given the subject even a small amount of attention—and it will be generally conceded, that it requires *quite* as much tact and ability to teach a class *well* in the former as in the latter, where the teacher has more assistance from books, and has to depend far less on her own resources; therefore, we ask that the general intelligence, grade of scholarship, and *salaries* of the teachers in the Primary Department be equal throughout to those of the Grammar Department, and that each train its own teachers until some better means can be instituted.

Besides, when we take into consideration the large number of children who graduate from our department, I think that those from whom they receive their early training should be persons of as high culture as the instructors of any other class of pupils.

We seriously object to the system of monthly records in our departments, and ask to be entirely relieved from the duty of making them out, on the ground that the small amount of good accomplished is not by any means commensurate with the time and labor involved in doing so. We would suggest that the children in the two highest grades be permitted to take home their readers, as it would in some measure tend to lighten the work of the teacher, and in many cases be of use to the parents. I do not wish to say much in regard to the ventilation and heating apparatus of our schools, as I understand that the defects in both are being remedied as rapidly as possible; but will simply remark, that during the past winter both teacher and pupils in some cases

have been obliged to keep on their outside clothing through the day, to avoid suffering with the cold ; and in many of the classrooms there are no means of ventilation whatever, unless by opening a window ; often causing a current of cold air to come directly on the heads of the children—a state of things not very conducive to either health or comfort.

It has been suggested that it would be a great relief to teachers to have a short vacation in spring ; we already have Good Friday, and if the other school days of the week in which that day occurs were added, we think it would have a beneficial effect, more particularly as the attendance in most of the schools is at that time very small, and the teacher has to work just as hard, with the prospect of having to go over the whole ground again the next week for those who have been absent.

Then, again, we think there would be great propriety in allowing the children, who, from regular attendance and attention to their studies are fully up to the grade, to go home at two o'clock, thus enabling the teacher to assist those who from absence, want of attention, &c., are not up to the rest of the class, and be herself ready to go home at three o'clock, which, under existing circumstances, she can by no means do.

Miss VIRGINIA BLAKE, Assistant in Male Department of Grammar School No. 55, addressed the Committee as follows :

Pursuant to an invitation extended by the Board of Education to the female assistants in Male Grammar Schools to meet a Committee from said Board on the 27th of April, a meeting was held of this grade of teachers, at which meeting the following resolutions were adopted :

*Resolved*, That the duties now prescribed for the middle and lower grades in the Male Grammar Schools are too laborious for both pupils and teachers.

*Resolved*, That the immediate causes of this arduous labor are : Indefiniteness of " Course of Studies ;" Interminable " Reviews ;" Promotions in masses and ill-qualified ; Overcrowded condition of middle and lower classes.

*Resolved*, That the system of marking as pursued by the City Superintendents at the Annual Examinations is an unfair method of denoting the capabilities of the teacher ; and the



publicity given to these marks makes them, in many cases, a weapon which may be boldly used to harass, condemn, degrade and remove the teacher from her position. The effect of this system is very serious upon both the physical and the mental health of the teacher, and, of necessity, acts in an injurious manner upon the pupils.

MR. CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN OF THE COMMITTEE :

We appear before you this evening to represent the Female Assistants in the Male Departments, but, more especially, are we here, to represent the pupils placed under the charge of the grade of teachers above mentioned, and to show wherein they are overworked. Therefore, our remarks will be made to bear, as far as possible, upon the direct interest and well-being of these pupils.

In our first resolution it is stated that the duties now required to be performed are too laborious for both pupils and teachers.

We will take up the second resolution, in which some of the causes of this arduous labor are set forth :

*"Indefiniteness of Course of Studies."*—This subject has already been ably discussed and the items of indefiniteness pointed out. As we look to the Principals for guidance in this matter and they have clearly shown they can give us no definite directions in regard to it—so we approach our pupils with the same indefiniteness, as to what is required of them by us, and thus, much time is spent and energy expended, without producing adequate results.

*"Interminable Reviews."*—This item also has been enlarged upon by the Principals. We are not only to require the pupils to study the subjects marked out in the grade, in which they may be at present, but a portion of their time and mental vigor must be spent in traveling over and over again the same beaten track, until "*review*" has become a sound not very delightful to a school-boy's ear. To meet these requirements the natural inquisitiveness of the pupil has to be kept down, and almost ignored, because, forsooth, if a teacher responds to this inquisitiveness, what becomes of those studies of her own and every body else's grade below hers, for all of which she is made responsible? A boy once said to his teacher, "What is impeachment?" a very

proper question for a boy to ask ; but could the teacher afford, under existing circumstances, to give the time to answer that question properly—she would have been doing a wrong to the pupil had she not answered the question.

*“Promotions in masses, and ill-qualified.”*—By promotion in masses is meant that the majority of pupils in a grade, and sometimes whole classes of a grade, are promoted to another grade ; in both cases, very often without examination by the Principal, and in opposition to the statement of the teacher of the unfitness of many of said pupils for promotion. We wish to be distinctly understood, that it is not so much the number of pupils which are thus promoted, that is a subject of grievance, as their want of qualifications ; and, we say most positively, that the pupils who are thus promoted, and the teacher from whose charge they are taken, are as much aggrieved, and even more, than the teacher in whose charge they are placed. The pupils are placed in a false position, by being put forward without being qualified ; receiving text-books on subjects corresponding to the grade which they are now in, for the study of which their minds have not been properly and sufficiently developed. The teacher, who receives these promotions, finds, upon examination, that a deficiency exists which she must ignore altogether (which she has no moral right to do), or she must meet this deficiency by doing the work of the grade below, at the same time taking up the studies of the grade, for which, to all intents and purposes, she is held responsible. The pupils are thus forced ahead—a sort of hot-house development, which is detrimental to all healthy mental growth, and, of necessity overworks the pupils and the teacher. Grades have been subdivided, for the purpose of accommodating the large number of pupils in a school. This arrangement acts, practically, in regard to promotions in this way : A grade may have two, three, or even more subdivisions. Pupils are taken sometimes from all of these divisions, and placed together in the same grade. Necessarily, they are in different stages of advancement, in the subdivided grade ; but, in the new grade which they have entered, they are placed on the same footing—making a confusion of elements. The teacher’s energies are now taxed to harmonize this incongruity. She must hold back some, hurry others forward ; and both pupil and

teacher are in a state of feverish mental excitement. It is not our province to make suggestions ; but we express this opinion, that it would be far better for the interest and comfort of the pupil, both physically and mentally, if there were many more subdivisions in the lower grades—even that half the pupils in a school should be in the 6th and 7th grades, rather than they should be hurried along, as is now the custom. But the popularity of the school and of the teacher is at stake, if the grades are not all kept up ; and, so these grades are represented by over-working the pupils. What is the popularity of a school or of a teacher, to the well-being of the pupil taught ? These schools were not instituted to make individuals famous, but to educate the children of this city.

To some minds, the present system of promotions in these lower grades may be an argument in favor of reviews. Reviews have reference to what has already been taught ; but in the case before us, the teacher must actually teach the studies of the lower grades, or the grades below her own. It does not come under the head of reviews at all.

*“ Over-crowded Condition of Middle and Lower Classes.”*—The over-crowded condition of the middle, but especially of the lower classes in the Male Departments, has also been referred to in the paper of the Principals. But, only those, who have had charge of these classes, can fully understand or appreciate the strain on the physical and mental health that comes from the effort to keep from 70 to over 100 pupils in a proper state of discipline, and instruct them at the same time. Such classes are usually placed under the charge of our youngest and most inexperienced associates. What wonder if they sometimes fail when unsustained ? They are obliged to learn, by painful experience, the best methods of governing and teaching.

In addition to the pressure of duties which belong to the department of instruction, we have many records to keep. We will call attention to but one at this time, that of the Monthly Records. The preparation of these requires much time and labor, and, as generally used, are of little or no account. We can conceive how such a record might be made an aid to the teacher under judicious management. The form of these

records could be simplified very materially, and still answer the object for which they were originally designed.

MR. CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN OF THE COMMITTEE—

We have now complied with your request as we understood it. We have long suffered from the evils we have brought to your notice this evening; but this is the first opportunity granted to us to speak of the grievances of those under our charge, and of our own. For the pupils of the middle and lower grades of the Male Grammar Schools, we must heartily thank you for the attention given to what has been said in their behalf. For ourselves, we wish that you may be prospered in any undertaking which has for its object and aim reform in the methods of education.

MISS ELIZABETH LOVERIDGE, of Grammar School No. 11, in behalf of the Assistants in the Female Departments of the Grammar Schools, said :

GENTLEMEN OF THE COMMITTEE —

In obedience to your invitation, the Assistants in the Female Departments of the Grammar Schools of the city of New York met together on the 24th day of April, 1868, for the consideration of the topics upon which their views were requested. After a full discussion, the following resolutions were harmoniously adopted as the embodiment of their experiences and convictions upon the questions of such vital import which are now happily beginning to agitate the public mind, and calling, in an imperative voice, for the introduction of such reform as shall be necessary to vitalize and complete that system of common education which we would fain consider as the crown of our institutions and the chief security of their permanence and welfare.

*Resolved*, 1st. That the duties required of the pupils and teachers of the Grammar Departments of our Public Schools are of too arduous a character.

2d. That the indefiniteness of the requirements—as set down in the Manual—particularly in the use of the word “outline”—is a cause of unnecessary labor to scholars and teachers.

3d. That the making of promotions into classes—without sufficient regard being paid to the fitness of the pupils—is a cause that makes the work of pupils and teachers too severe.

4th. That a teacher should not be held responsible at the examination of her class, by the City Superintendents, for the studies pursued in classes of a lower grade.

5th. That any class presented for examination should be examined in all the studies required by the grade.

6th. That the system of marking the results of an examination by a percentage is made a cause of much and unnecessary annoyance to teachers, whose qualifications to teach are judged of by the per cent. given.

7th. That the over-crowding of the lower classes is a serious drawback to the health and progress of pupils and teachers.

In presenting these statements for your consideration, the undersigned was requested to offer, on behalf of the great body of the teachers in our schools, such remarks as might be called for in explanation of their general mind, as conveyed in the above views.

That the tasks accorded the pupils under our charge are of too onerous a character, is a fact that may already be allowed, even before a consideration of the facts in the case, if we are to judge from the loud and numerous evidences which have already reached your ears—in the continuous and wide-spread complaint of those whose natural relations constitute them jealous guardians of the interests and welfare of these children.

That these complaints are only too well founded is the unanimous conviction of those who have been your agents in the work of operating the complicated machinery of our school system—and who, therefore, must be presumed to be thoroughly familiar with its operations and results.

Subjects are assigned to young children which are only truly appreciable by those of maturer growth, and the ratio and extent of these seem to increase as the grades advance. Broad fields are hurriedly traversed that can only be driven over—and not cultivated—and the mind becomes perplexed and weakened from the vast amount of matter that is thrust upon, but not taken within its grasp.



The prime object of education should be rather the cultivation of habits of thought, than the cramming of the memory with stores of figures and facts. Intellect is more than memory. A man may master all the lore of the books ; but if he has not the power to reason, and from given premises to draw a conclusion, he is as but a symbol. And in no way can the intellect be well developed, we repeat, except in the cultivation of habits of thought. This will be accompanied by steadiness of mind, attention and observation ; and with these established, the rest will legitimately and easily follow. This must be the basis upon which the superstructure must rest, and it is only upon this foundation that can rise the fair temple of intelligence in its completer and well proportioned form.

But this cannot be accomplished when the mind is distracted by a multiplicity of objects which must necessarily embarrass and disconcert its thoughts, or when it is driven with such a modern high-pressure railroad speed, that to its vision the swiftly passing scenes can give but an incentive and wavering impression of their true aspect.

A positive sincerity of mind is necessary to the perception of truth. Confuse it, overerowd it, and you may as well look to see the sun dawn upon the midst of night, as to expect the mind to grasp it. It has been said that "he who pours water into a muddy well, does but disturb the mud." But it is a no more profitable task to attempt to force a truth upon a mind that is unprepared to receive it. If the experiences of your servants are to be accepted, they have been too largely obliged to engage in such an unsatisfactory work.

In the education of children, the appetites and affections must be allured. Their lessons must not only be lodged with them—they must be made to espouse them. But how difficult and unfruitful must be our vocation, when our pupils become drudges rather than devotees ; and when to their great number their immediate and prospective duties are regarded as perils to be escaped, rather than joys and growth to be wedded.

It will be impossible, within the limits of this report, to point out just in what particulars these principles are violated, to suggest the propriety or impropriety of any particular portion of studies assigned to the different grades, as adapted to the ages

and abilities of the pupils. Upon these minutiae we shall have fair differences of judgment. But when we come to the general result, we are authorized to express to you our common opinion, in which we are confirmed by our united experiences, that the tasks imposed upon scholars, and therefore upon teachers, are of far too severe a character.

Nor is this owing, alone, to the number and difficulty of the studies. An important cause is formed, in the uncertain language of the Manual, prescribing their order and character. If "outlines" of subjects are required to be taught, some standard should be furnished to show just what these "outlines" are; and the teachers not be compelled to aggravate the prevailing evil, for fear of omitting some feature of the sketch that may be considered essential to its completeness.

It is equally unjust, too, that a teacher should be held responsible for the studies of lower grades which are presumed to have been mastered before the promotion of the scholars, and so declared by their advancement. The distinctive duties of each teacher are in themselves of sufficiently serious a nature without her being made accountable for the manner in which those below her may have accomplished their work, and for the facility with which the unworthy oftentimes secure their advancement. That scholars thus unfitted do frequently make their way from class to class, is a fact within the experience of us all. Examinations are not unfrequently the sole test of merit, and it is not always the fault of their instructors that pupils are sometimes advanced, whose six months record shows them to be among the less deserving of their class. The inquiry on these occasions into the attainments of each individual can, at best, be very superficial and partial. It is a fact, well admitted in our profession, that the smartest scholars, those who have shown themselves to be the most faithful and able, are not always the ones to shine with greatest excellence upon examination day. Nor is it true, to a less extent, that those who have been slothful and inattentive during the course may, perchance, appear to good advantage at this time when the investigation into their merits cannot be searching or thorough. In such a case a child may be flattered by promotion—but it is evident it is an injustice alike to the teacher, who in turn becomes responsible for

her sum of knowledge—and to the child—but to a more lasting degree—who is thus advanced to classes for which she has not been prepared by a mastery of the sub-strata of our system, and who is seriously injured in the true course and development of her career. From two to three hours are devoted to the examination of a whole class, in from five to ten studies, which have required from six to twelve months to drive through with zealous haste.

It cannot be expected that this will afford more than an education of efficiency, and certainly not such a test as should establish at once the deserts of the scholars and the fidelity and ability of the teacher. That these examinations are incomplete in their character is further evinced by the fact, that at times it is considered impossible to touch, even in this general way, upon all the studies pursued during the term—and, under the practice of our system, an inevitable injustice is thus done to pupils and teachers. Different pupils may excel in different departments, in accordance with their natural taste, inclination, or opportunities. Teachers may likewise be more successful in imparting the knowledge of a certain branch of instruction than in teaching others. It follows, therefore, that if a pupil be not examined in a study in which she may have this established excellence, but be judged upon another, in which, perhaps, she may prove inferior, that her marks do not represent her general and true merit, and the test is, therefore, an injustice to her and her teacher. We insist that, in the promotion of scholars, the daily record of their diligence and abilities should be taken as the true measure of their proficiency. For if the manner in which they have acquitted themselves every working day in six or twelve months be not this measure, it cannot certainly be found in their performance of a day. Other circumstances may operate to the disadvantage of an instructor, for it is unfortunately true, that this single performance of her class is made to be the official measure of her ability.

Examinations are sometimes continued until five o'clock, and even commenced after the close of the school session, when the energy of the pupils has been so taxed by the day's labor as to render it impossible to expect their real merit to be apparent. And, notwithstanding this, the teacher's capacity is judged of in

the ordinary manner, by the exact per cent. obtained by her class.

We would not have you suppose, from these remarks, that we look upon a supervision of our schools, in all their details, as unnecessary or offensive, or that the examinations are not as useful, as such, as the adaptation of means and time will allow. On the contrary, a thorough surveillance and watchful care is requisite in all systems of labor to secure the best results, and is especially required in one of such vast magnitude and numerous parts as that of our Public Schools.

What we ask is, not that the present system be suspended, but that it be completed, so that it may not in any way become an instrument of wrong.

Let the inquiry into every department be thorough and searching. If one or two examiners be inadequate to the work, let there be ten or twenty, or as many more as may be necessary, appointed to complete it, in order to secure the desired end. What we would respectfully urge upon you is, that the present plan, as affecting the promotion of scholars, and the reputation of our teachers for ability, is and must be unjust, opening the door to evils incalculable and far reaching in their results.

We are further asked to call your attention to the overcrowding of many of the lower classes, which operates as a serious drawback to the health and progress of teachers and scholars. This subject, in its hygienic aspect, is one which has of late years received so much study and attention, and its principles are so well understood and recognized, that we deem it quite unnecessary to remind you of the laws that require a free supply of pure air for the maintenance of health, or of the demoralizing influence of a corrupted atmosphere, or an overcrowded room. These will already be appreciated.

But there is another phase of this question which will not be readily discerned, but in which, to our mind, may be discovered the root of many of the distracting difficulties that beset the pathway of the teacher and retard and injure the welfare and progress of the scholar.

The character of a school is too widely considered as depending upon the public reputation it can establish for the high grade of its classes, and the number of scholars it can annually

succeed in arming with the diploma of final proficiency. The higher the grade of each class can be made, the greater the credit which is claimed for the school, and too generally conceded to it. In the same way, it is considered desirable to have as few classes in the lower grades as possible. For it would not be so reputable to have several classes representing the same low grade, or parts of grade, and thus separated for the convenience of effective teaching, as it would to have but one. It would be too great a preponderance of the baser elements, and so the honor of the school demands that they shall be disguised and compressed within the limits of a single class, in order to heighten the general effect. In this way, more than a hundred children are frequently placed in one class, and the same spirit that puts them there, further requires that these whole hundred children, by the unaided efforts of but one teacher, shall be accomplished not only in the lowest, but also in parts of the next highest grade, if it be within the reach of human energy and endurance.

How really weak, oppressive, and dangerous this policy is; how utterly subversive of the true aim of our institutions it must be, it needs no word of mine to convince you. But the evil does not stop here. Once admitted, it pervades the whole school with its pernicious influence. The supplementary and higher classes must be maintained and supplied, and, to this end, the forcing process is put in operation to push the children as far forward as they will go. Should this fail to furnish a supply sufficient to equal the demand—to appropriate an expressive phrase—the principle of, “they must go up any how,” is liberally applied to meet the deficiency.

It is of no moment that teachers may become responsible for scholars who may have proved deficient in the class below, but for whose proficiency there, and progress in her own, she becomes directly responsible. That is a matter that vitally concerns her alone, for her position is at stake, and the dread of a 74 per centage, which under the best of circumstances may come, is the sword that threatens her; drives her to a desperate exertion, and fills her with an anxious fear. It is of no moment that scholars are accorded tasks inconsistent with their previous attainments, and their capacity, and that the faithful are denied all opportunities for recreation and rest by the demand of their latest and



earliest hours for the committal of the lessons which the teacher is obliged to assign them in order to accomplish the ground laid out for her. The grade must be maintained; the high *aims* at least of the school be vindicated. "Rather a failure," and here, again, I quote: "Rather a failure with a higher grade, than a success in a lower one." It is unnecessary to urge the utter fallacy and hardship of this principle. We only need to assure you that it is too frequently the guide of our schools, to secure your remedy for this great and trying wrong, the fountain source of many of our most serious difficulties. And here let us gladly say, that these remarks are not intended for a universal, it may not be a general application. Where they *fit* they will strike home, and it may be that their object may be detected in the flutter they may create. If the picture be true in a single instance, it indicates some radical error or defect that should be remedied.

But it may be objected, that we are exceeding the bounds of your invitation in thus presenting the general grievances of teachers and scholars. Our answer is, that whatever evil affects one class, concerns and operates to the equal disadvantage of the other. An excessive task exacted from the one, is an excessive tax imposed alike upon the other, and an injustice to either is felt by both. The utmost sympathy must exist between them, for their labors are correlative. If in the discharge of their duties, instructors have been obliged to claim from their classes such an amount of work as to themselves has appeared unreasonable and reprehensible, it cannot be charged to their own door. It indicates, however, some serious antagonism of interest, which should not exist, and a deplorable neglect of those fundamental principles which must be observed in order to secure the true and harmonious development of our system of education.

It was Thomas Fuller, who, in his "Mist Contemplations on these Times," made some observations which are applicable to our own day and the present subject. Said he, "God's work must not be lazily, but leisurely performed. Haste maketh waste in this kind. The violent driving in of the nail will either break the head or bow the point thereof, or rive and split that which should be fastened therewith. Fair and softly goeth far, but alas! we have too many fiery spirits among us, who, with

Jehu, drive on so furiously, they will overturn all, if the furiousness be not seasonably retrenched."

These are the most prominent of the difficulties that beset the great body of those under your charge. But where, it may be asked, is the remedy, when the experiences of years have seemingly not discovered it? There are a few principles which must yet be incorporated into our government, and which may possibly contain the specific. And, chief of all, the schools must be more equalized, and placed upon the same footing. This basis must be determined, as one that shall represent the proper development of popular education; in this way rivalry between the several schools will be suppressed, or limited to the fair field of equal opportunities and work. No room will be afforded for the reckless rule of ambition—

"Thriftless ambition that wouldst ravine up  
Thine own life's being"—

—but all would feel the invigorating influence of a generous emulation. To effect this, the requirements must be reduced—the school divided into such number of classes as shall provide a reasonable field of study for each—each to be limited to a certain number of scholars and duplicated as the attendance requires. The same principle of division must be uniformly adopted throughout all the schools, in order to secure that harmony and unity of action that should characterize all the departments of so vast an institution. In this way a certain class would mean the same thing precisely in all the schools, and its title would indicate the exact line and extent of studies there pursued. This we regard as a step most essential to the correction and prevention of many of the prevailing abuses, and, with a judicious selection of studies, would, we believe, in a great measure remedy the inequalities and undue severities of our present system. We hope, nay expect, the best results from your investigation; and however unpleasant it may be to reflect upon the defects of an institution that has been cherished as the best development of beneficent purposes and devoted zeal, let us remember that they can be only removed when the most candid examination has revealed them.

Miss ELIZA WOODS, of Grammar School No. 33, next addressed the Committee on behalf of the Vice-Principals in Female Grammar Schools :

The Vice-Principals of the Grammar Schools for Girls respectfully present the following report on the questions now pending before the Committee, relating to the Supplementary Grade :

It is our deliberate conviction that the requirements of this grade, especially in the latter part, are such as demand, in the attempt to fulfill them, an amount of labor injurious, physically and mentally, to both teachers and pupils.

This arises almost entirely from one cause, the excessive number of studies to be pursued at once. It is true, that on page 122 of the Manual we read the names of only nine studies in the First Grade of this course ; but on page 124, we are told that every pupil passing a thorough examination in the studies prescribed for the Supplementary Course, shall be entitled to a full certificate of graduation. This includes both grades, and, with the addition of Reading, Spelling, and Definitions or Etymology, which, although not specified, are required at the examination, renders it incumbent upon us to teach fifteen different subjects at once, not including Music, French, German, or Latin, some of which we also find in every school.

That it is simply impossible to prepare our pupils for the "thorough examination" demanded of them, when eighteen or nineteen studies have to be taught in twenty-two hours a week, or, indeed, in any number of hours a week, needs no argument whatever, and we offer none.

But this hardship has its root in another, the review of subjects taught in the lower grades. If it is urged that this is necessary, in order that the knowledge previously acquired may be retained, we reply, that it is only necessary in a system like the present, where the child's mind is so burdened and confused with old studies and new studies, that she learns neither perfectly. Arithmetic, spelling, and definitions, for instance, that she has been studying for seven years at least, she is still oppressed with as special subjects, when five totally new ones are thrust upon her. If seven years of study have not given her

sufficient practical knowledge of these three branches, she is certainly not qualified to take up five new ones. Besides, this is not the true end of education, to store the memory with facts, and then keep them there by constant repetition. Its aim is infinitely nobler, and may be attained, even if many facts are forgotten.

The most eminent physiologists state that "six hours a day of close brain work is the maximum that the organ will endure without detriment," and that "the brain of an adult will bear, unharmed, an amount of labor which would be most injurious to a young person;" yet many of the young girls of our highest classes, in their efforts to accomplish the accumulated work of the latter part of this course, spend eight or ten hours a day in study, and thereby often injure their eyesight and health irrecoverably. This, much as we may deplore, we are entirely powerless to prevent, when so many different subjects have to be prepared for examination at the same time.

We may be told to take a longer period for preparation. In some cases this is not possible, on account of the urgent wishes of the girls and their parents that the time should be short, as at present. But if it were possible, it would not have the desired effect, for the pressure of the review of all these branches would still come at the end of the course.

Nor does the evil cease with the pupils; they have to endure all this but once, and some may escape without lasting injury. But it is far otherwise with the best and most faithful of our teachers, upon whom this grade presses more relentlessly every year. A comparatively short period of overwork and anxiety, and then, too surely, they find their reward in health destroyed, or impaired forever.

If, then, the Board of Education deem it essential to the true education of the girls of our Common Schools, that these nineteen subjects be taught therein, namely, Grammar, History, Arithmetic, Algebra, Geometry, Natural Philosophy, Astronomy, Physiology and Hygiene, Composition, Rhetoric, English Literature, Reading, Spelling, Definitions, Etymology, Drawing, Music, French, German and Latin; let them at least be so accompanied by the proper appliances, that the instruction in Natural Philosophy, for instance, may be more rational and more

satisfactory ; so clearly defined, that there may be no more of this anxiety as to what the work really is ; and so distributed, that each class may pursue a less number of studies than at present, and may be responsible only for its own legitimate work.

MISS GERTRUDE SIMPSON, of Grammar School No. 14, continued on behalf of the assistants in Female Grammar Schools :

As my associate delegate, in her report, has included all the resolutions passed by the assistant teachers of the Female Grammar Schools, at their meeting of April 24th, I propose to make only a few additional remarks. One of the worst features of overcrowding of the schools is the insufficiency of class-room accommodation, so that two, three, and sometimes even four classes are taught in one room, the general assembling room of the department. No one who has not experienced this evil can form any adequate conception of the difficulties under which the teachers of these classes labor. Liable to many interruptions, as passing to and from the class-rooms, most of which open into this room—entrance of visitors—a large portion of their time must be devoted to maintaining the strict order necessary, and constant exercise of vigilance and ingenuity is required to prevent the minds of the pupils from wandering to the many attractions the place presents. They teach under a feeling of repression and restraint, from the necessity of conducting the exercises so quietly as not to attract the attention of the pupils of another class separated from theirs only by a narrow aisle ; yet so forcibly as to keep the attention of their own, and the necessary avoidance of all concert recitations, which are used so successfully by many teachers of large classes in class-rooms. A teacher in a class-room may relax a little of the strict order, and devote all her time to the exercise of the hour, may use interesting and amusing illustrations, may excite the ambition of her pupils by placing them according to excellence, and use many little arts and contrivances, which she cannot work effectively in the room with another class. Again, these classes are generally of the lower grades, very large, and taught by the younger and less experienced teachers, who have to learn to discipline and teach under such adverse circumstances, who have not yet learned to economize



time and their own energies, and who are nervously anxious about their success, and therefore make strenuous endeavors to achieve the same results at an examination as those who teach under more favorable circumstances. And they frequently succeed, but at an expense of labor and anxiety which may undermine the health.

The making of promotions without paying due regard to the fitness and capacity of the pupils is, where it exists, a serious cause of complaint. Many teachers having large classes, and therefore not being able to devote as much time to individual members as if their classes were smaller, in order to bring them up to the requirements, will work before and after school hours with the backward pupils, doing serious injury to themselves and the scholars. These children are compelled to spend more time in school than others, and of course have the same tasks to perform out of it. Many of them have not the capacity to advance as rapidly as their smarter companions, and why should they be made to suffer for a natural deficiency? If one child requires twice as long to complete a grade as another, why press it on and attempt to force it? This evil is felt most seriously by the teachers of the higher classes, who often receive pupils who have passed too rapidly through the preceding grades to master them thoroughly, and have, in addition to teaching the studies of the grade, to fit them for it.

In asking that our classes (by this we mean all the pupils presented as a class) be examined in all the studies required by the grade, we are fully aware of the magnitude of the request. We know that the Superintendents have many schools to attend to, that they are very much pressed for time, and that they devote to each school as much as under present circumstances they can. Yet this knowledge does not prevent both scholars and teachers from feeling keenly the injustice of judging their successes by a brief examination of a portion of a class in each of a few of the prescribed studies. Sometimes as many as four large classes are examined by one Superintendent in one day. And we have heard quite recently of a class of the Second Supplementary Grade, which was examined in only three of its studies. The results of such an examination are stated at a percentage, and purport to indicate the success of a class. These percentages do not repre-

sent the qualification of a class, but the number of questions in a certain study answered correctly by a portion of a class, not a year's work, but the success of a few studies. Pupils and teachers have common ground of complaint in this matter. The children possess different capacities and tastes, and of course will excel in some studies and attain only mediocrity in others. One child may be examined in one of the latter, and not acquit herself creditably ; and not having the chance of retrieving her reputation in another study in which she excels, has the unhappiness of knowing she has contributed to lowering the percentage of her class. The teachers also have varied talents, and although those branches for which they have not a decided taste have been much improved by application, they are likely to have more success in teaching those for which they have talents. In our schools, unlike private educational institutions, colleges, etc., one teacher teaches all the studies required, and in the higher classes these are not few. A teacher presents such a class for examination after a year or more of hard work. Is an examination in two or three studies a fair test of her labor ?

In the case of those pupils who are inclined to be indolent, and irregular in their attendance, the teacher loses one powerful agent, their ambition. They find that they are advanced as rapidly as their more studious companions, and where is the use of exerting themselves ? and the ambitious ones are chagrined that their arduous efforts produce no higher reward. We believe this evil to be the result of two causes, the over-crowding especially of the lower classes, and the fact that a large proportion of the pupils do not remain in school long enough to attain the higher grades. In order to fill up these classes, and make room for the promotion from a Primary which must be accommodated, it is sometimes a necessity to advance too rapidly. We most respectfully offer for your consideration a suggestion, which, if carried out, will, we are confident, abolish this most pernicious evil, the establishment of intermediate departments, where the lower grades may, if necessary, be duplicated, and several of which may supply the higher grades.

MISS LIZZIE A. PARDEE, of Grammar School No. 55, in behalf of the Vice-Principals of the Primary Departments and Schools, said :

## MR. CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN OF THE COMMITTEE—

At a meeting of the Vice-Principals of the Primary Schools and Departments, the following resolutions were unanimously adopted :

*Resolved*, That the present course of studies does not, in our estimation, overtax either teacher or pupils.

*Resolved*, That the present course of studies would be rendered more efficient by permitting the scholars of the two highest grades to take their books home.

*Resolved*, That over-crowded and poorly ventilated classrooms seriously effect the health of both teachers and pupils.

In presenting, for the consideration of this Committee, the resolutions which have been read, we propose to state, briefly, the arguments which induced their adoption.

On the resolution pertaining to the grades of studies as now pursued in the Primary Departments, we desire to say, that while we are unanimous in our approval, we earnestly suggest a modification of the requirements of the grades, so far as relates to the studies of elementary sounds and objects.

While we recognize a necessity for these branches, we are of the opinion that in elementary sounds the study should be carried no further than is necessary to correct defects of pronunciation, and assist the pupil in acquiring a proper articulation. In object lessons, we do not deem actually necessary the special and minute questions which we are required to ask, "with a view of cultivating habits of attention and observation on the part of the pupil." Children naturally observe the general characteristics of familiar animals, without the aid of such questions as : "What is their covering?" "How many feet have they?" "What is their food?" "What noises do they make?" and others of a like description.

Teachers have become impressed with the belief that a necessity exists for making these branches special subjects for teaching, and the practice has obtained to such extent, that more time is given to those studies than is in reality requisite; and we believe that a large portion of the time thus occupied could be employed more profitably by the pupil in the pursuit of studies of greater importance.

Touching the second resolution, it is the opinion of the Vice-Principals that it would not only be a source of help to the children, but also of great assistance to the teacher, were the children permitted to take home their books. Nearly all of the better class of children have books at home, which their parents have bought. They, of course, have many advantages which the poorer children cannot enjoy. The parents of a child who cannot afford to purchase a book for it, wonder that the children who have sat beside their own are promoted to a higher grade in advance of theirs ; and many times we have been charged with pursuing a partial course of action, and of being influenced by the better circumstances of the scholar promoted. It is unnecessary to deny the accusation ; the only reason which can be assigned for such advancement, being the fact that the advantages of the one having books at home, were *superior* to those of the other, who had none ; and if there be any advantage to be gained from books being taken home, we contend that the poorer classes should have the benefit of it.

We do not wish lessons to be given out for the express purpose of home study, but all teachers can bear witness that the mental powers of children differ to a very great degree. The lesson which would occupy one child but a few minutes to commit to memory, cannot possibly be acquired by another in the same length of time. Thus we see pupils who have devoted every energy they may possess to the learning of a lesson, during the time the teacher may have set apart for that purpose, upon being questioned become confused, and having only a slight knowledge of the answer required, after an unsuccessful attempt to give it properly, sink in confusion into their seats, and suffer the more keenly from their instinctive feeling of having been in some way wronged. Had those children been allowed to take their books with them to their homes, with the explanations and remarks of the teacher fresh in their minds, they would have completely overcome the difficulties of the task, and when called upon to recite, would have passed successfully through the ordeal, and no one will hesitate to say that the day's experience would have been the happier from the good effects of a well-learned lesson.

Taking books from our scholars is certainly a matter of little

or no economy. When children receive a set of books, they immediately determine that they shall be nicely kept, and with a careful teacher's eyes often scanning not only the covers, but also the pages of the books, they are well cared for, and in almost every instance present a tidy appearance. As the rules governing this matter now stand, the books are given only for the school hours. It would require more time than the teacher could spare should she attempt to make a daily examination ; and as it is impossible for the same books to be given to the same child every day, some mischievous child tears or defaces one book to-day, another to-morrow, and another at some future time. Thus by degrees they become mutilated and worthless. You may say that the teacher should be more watchful ; but, gentlemen, it would take as many eyes as Argus possessed to watch at the same time every child in a large class. This is simply impossible, for while the most perfect order may apparently prevail, some busy fingers may be working the destruction of the books. It is not economy, and even if it were, we do not think you would consider a few dollars and cents, were you convinced that it would benefit the pupil to take books home. Such a course is certainly desirable, and we ask you to consider this matter in all its bearings, and trust you will coincide with us in our views.

In reference to the subject matter of our third resolution, much has been said, and there is still room for enlargement.

We appeal to you to remedy, in some way, the over crowding of rooms, which is daily increasing in many of our schools. We speak now particularly of the lower classes, for in them we find the greatest danger of over-crowding. There are the pupils who will fill the higher classes, and we must have them to keep those classes full. We want them, but we also want healthful accommodations for them. No class-room should have in it one hundred or one hundred and fifty children, when there can be obtained pure air for only seventy or seventy-five.

The class-rooms in many schools have windows which open upon the walls of some other building, and are thereby in a measure deprived of pure air, while there are others which are rendered impure from causes which may, perhaps, be more easily allayed than the first named. The children occupying



such rooms become dull and weary. The exercises lose their interest—the teacher strives in vain to arouse their waning attention, and at last they drop, like withered flowers, and fall into a state of insensibility which we call sleep, but which is really more like the effects of some poisonous narcotic than like healthy slumber. Children, packed and crowded into small class-rooms, cannot inhale the proper amount of pure air necessary for health, nor can they be properly instructed. Many teachers have vainly endeavored to perform the duties required of them in a faithful manner, where the numbers have been greater than any two persons could effectually teach, and when, from force of circumstances, they have been obliged to acknowledge their failure, they have become either despondent and broken in health, or careless and indifferent in their work.

Give a teacher as many scholars as she *ought* to teach, with proper accommodations for them, and there would be fewer poor teachers, and happier results in every respect.

Mrs. VANDERBILT, of the Primary Department of Grammar School No. 35, next addressed the Committee on behalf of the Assistants in Primary Schools, as follows :

At a meeting of the Assistant Teachers of Primary Schools and Departments, pursuant to an invitation of the Joint Committee appointed by the Board of Education, after consideration of the subject presented to them, the following preamble and resolutions were adopted, and the undersigned were appointed delegates to present the same :

*Whereas*, It is the conviction of this meeting that a reform is required in the work prescribed for both pupils and teachers ; therefore,

*Resolved*, That at the examinations, teachers should not be held responsible for reviews of a lower grade, in Object Lessons.

*Resolved*, That in Arithmetic, too much is required in the First Grade to insure proficiency.

*Resolved*, That the number of pupils in each class be regulated by law, and not allowed to exceed it.

*Resolved*, That proper accommodations should be provided, as some class-rooms are dark, damp, ill-ventilated and overcrowded.

*Resolved*, That the terms for preparation for promotions should be equally divided.

*Resolved*, That some provision should be made for the care of the boys while in the play-grounds.

*Resolved*, That the monthly records should be abolished, as no benefit is derived therefrom commensurate with the labor required in preparing them.

*Resolved*, That the children of the First and Second Grades should be permitted to carry books home.

*Resolved*, That the Primary Departments should be dismissed at 2 o'clock.

*Resolved*, That the schools should have a short spring vacation.

*Resolved*, That the writing should not be required at a time specified.

As we may be considered the lesser delegates, we would offer an apology for our lengthy remarks, and request you to bear in mind that this is the first (and may be deemed advisable should be the last) hearing given to us; also, that we educate almost twice the number of children as are taught in the Grammar Departments, consequently giving to nearly *one-half* the children of our city *all* the education they receive, and to the remainder, the foundation of their subsequent studies; and also, that for many years these have been our private opinions, now publicly and honestly expressed, not ungratefully or complainingly, but by your kind and considerate invitation, being prepared to support each resolution as you will have the time and patience to hear us.

Mrs. JANE E. SIMMS, Assistant in the Primary Department of Grammar School No 48, followed Mrs. Vanderbilt in behalf of the teachers of her grade, and spoke to the resolutions read by her associate, as follows:

MR. CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN OF THE COMMITTEE—The assistants in the Primary Schools and Departments think that, although they may be regarded as of little consequence, their charge is, in reality, the most important portion of the entire school system. They are obliged to lay the foundation for all instruction that may come afterwards, and have generally twice

as many children to care for as the teachers in the Grammar Departments. In regard to the first resolution, you have heard quite enough from the teachers of the Grammar Schools. Our opinion on the subject, it will be seen, fully coincides with theirs.

We think there should be some by-law regulating the number of children to a class; and although we are well aware that it is desirable to have the attendance large, yet it should not be more than is consistent with the health of both pupils and teachers. Although I have never seen as many as one hundred and fifty children in a class, I have seen class-rooms, which were intended to accommodate from fifty to eighty pupils, frequently crowded by between eighty and one hundred.

According to the By-Laws of the schools, they are to be opened at 9 A. M. and closed at 3 P. M., but they are in reality occupied from 8.30 A. M. until 3.30 P. M. I am in favor of one session per day, extending from 9 A. M. until 2 P. M., as more conducive to the health of pupil and teacher. The little ones should be guarded from over-crowded rooms, and filth and dirt, which they are liable to come into contact with, from the number of children that are assembled in the Public Schools. If some of these close rooms and galleries were used as hot-houses, how long would the plants live? I speak of this matter as a mother, and address gentlemen as fathers, and many ladies as mothers. Then why not have us dismiss at two o'clock? Some Principals say we would have very unruly classes, and deficient classes, and this and that. Am I off at three o'clock because the By-Laws say so? I think not. If we dismissed our good and proficient scholars at two o'clock, we would still have to keep in our delinquents. But our children should be relieved, whether we are or not.

Another resolution asks that some provision should be made for the care of the boys in the play-grounds, as it is exceedingly disagreeable for a lady to spend half an hour or an hour, once or twice a day, in a boy's play-ground.

The resolutions speak of a spring vacation. The unusual exhaustion of the season requires such a vacation to re-invigorate. I heard a teacher say, not long since, when she had been laid on a bed of sickness two months, "I should have been saved this

sickness if I had had one week's vacation." If she could have been out of school one week sooner, she would have been saved two months of sickness. She is not the only case; there are many others. It would be beneficial to both teachers and scholars to have such a vacation. I would have given anything for a week's vacation for my daughter—not for myself, but for my daughter. But so long as there is school, her heart is there, whether she is there or not. I might as well try to hold, I don't know what, as hold her when there is school. She must be there, and I frequently have to suffer the consequences. In regard to another resolution, teachers complain that they are compelled to do their writing out of school. Now, if a teacher accomplishes her task in a prescribed time, why restrict her further? why compel her to take her reports home, and her roll-book? And in some instances I have heard where teachers are compelled to take home the multiplication table and write it out to give to their scholars to study. That was in the absence of books. If the teachers accomplish their work and writing in a prescribed time, why restrict them further? At lunch hour they are frequently compelled to write out their reports and rolls, with their lunch in their hands. I was taught it was not well to read or write, or have the mind employed at all, while eating. If so, that is all right. This is all I have to say, gentlemen. I have not come before you with my statement written out, as those who preceded me. What I had to say, I simply wished to state as I did. I thank you for your attention.

The Committee then adjourned until Monday, the twenty-fifth day of May, 1868, at 5 o'clock, P. M.

## THIRD SESSION.

The Committee met, pursuant to adjournment, on Monday, May 25th, 1868.

*Present*—Commissioners Merrill, (*Chairman*,) Dupignac, Hall, Neilson, West, Duryea, Warren, and Euring.

The CHAIRMAN announced that Samuel S. Randall, City Superintendent of Schools, and his assistants, would address the Committee in response to the views presented by the Principals, Vice-Principals, and others, at previous sessions.

Mr. RANDALL then addressed the Committee as follows :

MR. CHAIRMAN, AND GENTLEMEN OF THE COMMITTEE—

The investigation in which we have been engaged for the last two sessions of this Committee is one of the most grave, and important, and serious nature; affecting, as it does, the foundation and superstructure, and the internal organization of our whole system of public instruction—that system which we have been accustomed to look upon, for the past ten years, as one of the most perfect, and the noblest in the whole world—that system which we have held up to the admiration and gaze of other cities and States, and even of other countries, as being the most complete and efficient organization of any system in existence, either in Europe or America—that system which has, for so many years, possessed the entire confidence and regard of our fellow citizens of every class and description—that system which has not only been proclaimed by us in public as being as near perfection as any system of popular education could have been made, but has been recognized by the most experienced representatives of other States and countries to be the most eminently just and admirable plan of education in the world.

Twenty-five hundred teachers, in the employ of the Board of Education, through representatives selected by themselves from among their ablest and most experienced men and women—selected from both sexes—have come forward here, and have proclaimed to us that the Course of Studies prescribed by the Board of Education, for the government and administration of this sys-



tem, is radically and seriously defective in its most important particulars; that it is not up to the requirements of the age; that it is imposing upon them burdens which they are unable to bear; that these burdens have been fearfully aggravated by the manner in which that system of studies has been administered by the Superintendent and his assistants, and that, in consequence of the requisitions which have been made upon their energies and abilities, their physical and mental health and powers have been seriously affected. These points embrace the main features of the charges which have been made here, and which have not only been laid before this Committee, but have been scattered over the entire country, and, indeed, the whole world, through the medium of the newspapers of the day.

Now, gentlemen, if these allegations, or any of them, are true, then, unquestionably, it is high time that the Board of Education should retrace its steps; that we should go to those gentlemen who have visited our schools, and who have bestowed such praise upon the system, and its administration, and say to them, "Gentlemen, you are mistaken in these matters—instead of our system of public education being one of the best in the world, it is in reality one of the worst; it is a mere despotism and a tyranny, and is ruining the health of our teachers, and imposing upon them burdens which they cannot bear." This is the substance of the whole matter. We must, therefore, investigate it, and ascertain if these charges be true, and, in that case, reconstruct the entire system, humbly confessing that for the last ten or fifteen years we have been pursuing a wrong direction.

On the other hand, if it should turn out—and such a thing may be possible—that all these charges, preferred with such great unanimity, *are true*, but that they are not due to the action of the Board of Education, or the Superintendents; that they are not due to any fault committed by the Board, or its representatives or agents, *but are nevertheless true*, then there is another duty devolving upon this Committee, and that is, to ascertain where these abuses come from, where they originate. That they are true, we can hardly permit ourselves to doubt. We can hardly dare to think that twenty-five hundred teachers of ability and experience, as they have shown themselves to be,

would come here and unanimously proclaim to us that there are all these great abuses, unless these abuses actually exist. But here, with reference to this question—it might be that the abuses and defects complained of do exist, but that they have attributed them to the wrong quarter. If this latter theory be true, then your next duty is to ascertain in what quarter the blame does exist. If the effect of the Course of Studies is radically and deficiently wrong, may it not be the fault of the teachers themselves? May it not be attributable to the Trustees, or to the parents, or to the children themselves? If the health of the teachers has been impaired in consequence of the great duties imposed upon them, or if the health of pupils has been injured and impaired, or the ravages of death have come among them, it does not inevitably follow that all, or any, of these evils are in consequence of the duties imposed upon them by the Board of Education, or resulting from the administration of these duties by the Superintendents. It may be from other and entirely different sources, and it is for you, therefore, to ascertain from what direction the grievances in question do proceed. If the Course of Studies is wrong, correct it, or if the administration is wrong, correct that. If the faults are the faults of others, find out what the faults are, where they lie, and correct the matter there. We have here all the facts and arguments before us, and indeed everything which will enable us to ascertain where the fault is; and this, gentlemen of the Committee, I hold to be the duty which you, as the representatives of the Board of Education, owe to the people, to the great and important interests which you represent, and to yourselves, and the teachers who have laid their complaints before you. These charges have gone broadcast to the winds, from one extremity of our continent to the other, through the public papers, which have announced that the great body of teachers have united in the expression that these abuses do exist. Whether they do or do not exist, is the subject with which we are now to deal. I do not stand here, however, as the advocate of any particular theory, but I stand here to tell what my own knowledge is, and what my experience and that of my colleagues has been in this matter. I am anxious, only, to ascertain and apply the corrective where it may be needed, and, in

that view alone, I undertake a brief discussion of the question, upon such reasoning as the arguments and facts which have come before me will, in my opinion, justify.

In the first place, gentlemen, you are undoubtedly aware that we have had a Course of Studies prescribed during the entire organization of the Board. The Course of Studies preceding the present one was adopted in 1866, and remained in force and operation until the latter part of the year 1867. In September, I think, of that year, some complaints were made that there was too great a pressure upon the teachers and pupils, which was attributed to the then existing Course of Studies. I do not know where those complaints originated, but they certainly were made, and the facts were communicated to the Committee on the Course of Studies, of which Mr. Roosevelt was then Chairman. On the very next day, a meeting of that Committee was held, and it was determined that the matter should be investigated. The Superintendents were directed to look into and ascertain the nature of the complaints, and see what remedies should be applied. That was done. My colleagues and myself were engaged for some three months in that investigation, and we finally determined that it would be expedient to revise the whole system.

It was complained, among other things, that there were too many studies in the grades, and that the result of that was that there was too great a stress upon the energies of both teachers and pupils. We exerted ourselves to remedy any evils that were manifested, and finally agreed upon the existing Course of Studies, which will be found in the Manual. We added to the Course of Studies then pursued, the entire Seventh Grade, the minimum time for the completion of the study of which was six months, and no maximum was fixed at all. We extended the First Grade from six months minimum to one year minimum, and did so with the express statement that the time be so extended. We extended the time of the supplementary classes indefinitely, the minimum time being put down at two years, and, in fact, we cut down every grade. For instance, in Geography, where it was, under the previous system, necessary to go through complete studies in the successive grades of the various countries, we substituted the *obnoxious* word "outlines"

instead. Where it was formerly necessary to go through the whole history of America, and Greece, and France, and Rome, we substituted the outlines of those histories. In like manner, where it had been necessary, in Astronomy, to go through all the problems, we substituted the outlines of astronomy. In Algebra, we substituted the same thing, making it necessary only to go thoroughly through the fundamental principles of algebra and geometry, and so went through the entire Course of Studies revising and amending; cutting down in nearly every grade, and reducing them very much.

The Course of Studies, as then submitted, was adopted at the last session of the Board in the year 1867, and the Superintendents were directed to send a copy to all the teachers in the city, accompanied by a Manual, explaining everything that might be doubtful, so as to make it as certain and explicit as possible. That duty was performed diligently during the month of January, and about the first of February the new Course of Studies had been supplied to all the schools.

You will bear in mind, gentlemen, that the Course of Studies this year commenced in September, and there was, therefore, about five months before that Course of Studies could have been reached by them. Now the first obvious remark made here is, that at the time these resolutions were submitted to the Board of Education, there had been no time for the teachers to have had any experience as to what that Course of Studies was. Those of them who had been going on for five months were directed to go on until the examination, and then take up the new Course. You will, therefore, perceive that, in reality, the charges which have been made here in reference to the Course of Studies must have had reference to the former Course of Studies, which was much more severe than the present one. But, up to that time, no complaints had been made in reference to that Course of Studies, and we are given to understand that all the arguments which have been used here have been in reference to the existing Course of Studies.

The first point which I shall make here is, that the teachers have not had the opportunity to ascertain what the faults were in this present Course of Studies. Now under the Course of Studies, as pursued in the years 1865 and 1866, what was the result?—

and it must be remembered that that was a much more difficult Course of Studies than the existing one, in all respects, and one which must have taxed the energies of teachers much more severely. In 1865, it appears, by the report of the examination for that year, that the whole number of pupils examined during that year was sixty-two thousand four hundred and fourteen; the number of classes examined was one thousand six hundred and sixty-eight. Of these classes, eight hundred and fifty-one, or fifty-one per cent., were reported as "excellent;" five hundred, or thirty per cent., as "good;" or, in other words, we had upwards of eighty per cent. reported as of average attainment, or exceeding the average. This gives us thirteen hundred and fifty-one classes altogether, out of sixteen hundred and sixty-eight, of that report as "excellent" or "good," and an average result of the examination as reaching eighty per cent, or four-fifths of the whole number. And that was the result of the examination of that year, under the previous Course of Studies.

Next year—1866—the number of classes obtaining and exceeding an average of eighty-two per cent, (out of the whole number of classes examined,) was eleven hundred and sixty-two. The total average percentage (in all the schools) of scholars was eighty-two per cent. The number of classes exceeding seventy-five per cent. was ten hundred and sixty-five; the total number exceeding eighty per cent. was seven hundred and two; exceeding ninety per cent., five hundred and twelve; and exceeding ninety-five per cent., two hundred and seventy-six. That was the result of 1866, and now let us see what was done in 1867.

The last report (showing the results of the last examination of the classes, for the year 1867, previous to the introduction of this "rigid" system) shows the whole number of classes examined to have been fourteen hundred and twenty-five, and a total average of scholarships of eighty and three-sevenths per cent. The number of classes obtaining and exceeding seventy-five per cent., was thirteen hundred and seventeen; the number exceeding eighty-five per cent., nine hundred and thirty-nine; exceeding ninety per cent., six hundred and three; exceeding ninety-five per cent., two hundred and thirty-six; and the number obtaining one hundred per cent., was forty-two. And there was only one hundred and eight below seventy-five per cent.



Now here are three successive years, during which the Course of Studies pursued was much more severe than under the present Course, and yet, for these three years, in succession, we find the classes obtaining and receiving an average percentage of eighty-one. Now that is a fact that is worth keeping in mind. Notwithstanding all the ill health of the teachers and scholars, and the fear of the Superintendents, it seems that four-fifths of all the classes succeeded in obtaining averages of eighty per cent. and upwards. And I heard no complaint that this Course of Studies was at all burdensome or oppressive. On the contrary, every one seemed perfectly cheerful. I don't remember seeing anything more cheerful or contented than the countenances of the teachers during that period—except at this investigation. But now this Course of Studies has been materially cut down and reduced, and yet we are told that all those fearful results, which have been enumerated at these meetings of your Committee, have followed; that the whole system of education has collapsed under the terrible strain brought to bear upon the health of both teachers and pupils. And before it has been submitted to their experience by any adequate trial, or time for a trial at all, it is condemned as impracticable and injurious.

Permit me to come now to the examination of some of the allegations which have been made. The first resolution, propounded by the teachers and supported here by their representatives, reads in this way :

*Resolved*, That it is the sense of this Association, that too much work is demanded by the Board of Education from teachers and pupils.

Now, gentlemen of the Committee, in view of all the facts of the case, as stated by these complainants themselves, permit me to ask you whether we have had any sufficient proof that "too much work is demanded from teachers and pupils?" Let us see! I mean, now, that I desire to ascertain whether too much work is demanded by the Course of Studies, or by the By-Laws of the Board of Education. That is in my judgment the first thing to be considered in view of the charges and complaints made. I do not stand here, however, to deny that these ill results do exist or have obtained, although I will come to the

consideration and examination of that subject by and by. But what I do say is, that proof that too much work is demanded does not exist, or at least has not been presented to your Committee by those who have given their views and experience on the matter.

My friend, Mr. Kennard, says—and others have united with him in the assertion—that the teachers are required, on an average, to teach during four and a half hours of each day. That is, the period occupied in actual teaching is stated to be four and a half per day. So, they are required, it will be seen, to teach during each day for four and a half hours, during five days in the week, and extending over a space not exceeding ten months during the whole year.

Now, can it be possible that this is exerting such a fearful strain upon the teachers? Where is the evidence of it? Do you see it around you here? Is there any great evidence of minds or bodies overtaxed or broken down by this terrible pressure of labor? Four and a half hours for five days in the week, and for ten months in the year, is all that is required from the teachers, and the way they have performed that work has been already shown you. Here are all the classes gaining, and instead of eighty per cent., a good average, many of them have attained a hundred per cent. That is the way they have done their work, and I see no puny faces or exhausted mental or physical systems around me here.

How is it with the pupils? Now, by the By-Laws of the Board of Education, it is prescribed that two hours shall be the maximum time that any pupil shall be required to study out of school hours, and in the case of Primary Departments they are not required to have any studies allotted to them out of school. And where they are required to study out of schools it is stated that the lessons shall be first illustrated and explained, and that no work in grammar or arithmetic or any of the abstruser sciences shall be given to pupils, for home study, excepting those in some of the superior grades. And, during school hours you are aware that no studies are pursued at all. There is an hour and a half or two hours occupied by the recesses, and the rest of the time is taken up by recitation and explanatory instruction, etc.; so that, in reality, two hours study on the part of pupils is all that

is required. Now, where is the excessive strain upon the health or "the physical and mental energies" of the pupils? The greatest writers on education are willing to admit that three or four hours per day in any school is not an excessive length of time for instruction, and it ordinarily is extended to five or six hours per day. I ask you, therefore, in view of these facts, is there any undue strain imposed upon the physical or mental energies of teachers or pupils, by any provisions of the By-Laws of the Board of Education? And with all due respect, I submit that there is none.

Passing from this subject, I will advert next to the grounds taken by the representatives of the teachers, that teachers should not be held responsible for studies in the lower or preceding grades. Now, what does this mean? Why, it has been stated here that promotions are very frequently made under the old system by the Principals of the Primary Departments and the Principals of the Grammar Schools, and that they have been examined by the Principals of the latter, and when promotions are made from classes or schools, they are always made by the Principals of the schools. And when new scholars come into the schools, they are always examined and classified by the Principal of the school. And it is also stated that the examinations are not always sufficiently rigid, and that teachers have sometimes been transferred without sufficient examination. What then takes place? Suppose thirty or forty are transferred unprepared, and these pupils are put under the care of the teacher of the Grammar School, what must she do? It is utterly impossible for her to go on one step further until she knows what their standing is. When promotions are made, from the higher to the lower grade, how could any teacher get along without being perfectly conversant with the lower grades? She could not expect to do it; it would be out of her power; and then indeed it might be said that "the burden laid upon her was greater than she could bear." Every teacher thinks—there is not a teacher here who does not think—that if she was charged with such a class, she would find out in what they are deficient and bring them up to the grade. Indeed, it would be absolutely necessary. And suppose you repeal that by-law, what would be your standard of scholarship? It would be worse than nothing

at all, and therefore the Board of Education have required, through its By-Laws, by a system of reviews, that every month a review should be had of the studies of the preceding Course, and that upon promotions, particularly, a perfect and thorough review should be had of the studies preceding that Course. Perhaps it might be as well to treat that question of reviews in connection with this question at present before me, as well as at any other time. I ask you, can anything like complete scholarship be attained without reviews? In geography, history, and arithmetic, they say no such necessity exists, and they go so far as to tell us that pupils might be permitted to go on without reviewing South America while they are studying the geography of Europe, or that when studying Greek or Roman history they need not be troubled by reviewing the history of France or Spain, and that, in fact, it is not necessary that they should keep the previous studies in their minds at all. I ask you, gentlemen, if you consider that a specimen of the scholarship of the Public Schools of New York? I have never known a system of education which might be pursued in that way, or in which the pupil might study the history of the French or Indian wars independently, and forget the boundaries in the history of their own State. No such standard as that has been adopted anywhere that I know of. If any part of the Course is to be forgotten the moment it is learned, and never recalled again, then, I say, banish it from the Course at once, for if it is proper, it is proper never to study it, or learn it—if the studies are not worth keeping in mind, then they certainly are not worth learning at all. The moment you take away this system of reviews, that moment you strike at the very foundation of the system of public instruction which we have adopted, and make it valueless. But it is, after all, a mistake in phraseology. Teachers are *not* held responsible for the studies in the lower grades; they are not held responsible for them at all; they are only held responsible for the class, and the responsibility does not rest upon the faithful teacher who endeavors to perform her duty. I regard it, therefore, gentlemen, as essential to the validity of any system of public instruction that it should be reviewed—that it should be kept up, so that when our teachers leave our schools they shall be fully acquainted with all the previous studies. But if such a course

as the neglect or abolishment of these reviews is pursued, or effected, it will be merely reducing our system of public instruction to an empty and purposeless ceremony. Enough, however, upon that subject, except to say that there has never been a time when these reviews were not necessary. And, as it is at present practiced, the Committee has reduced its laboriousness by putting it from once a week to once a month.

We come now to the next charge, in reference to the use of this term "outline," as being very indefinite. Well, I assume that it is somewhat indefinite, and I admit that it might call for the Board of Education to explain what is the meaning of the term "outline." Not that we suppose that any teacher in New York did not know the meaning of the word "outline," or that he or she did not know the principal features of the outlines of geography or history. But we were told there would be a difference of opinion as to what these outlines were, and undoubtedly there would be. Suppose we were to go into the designation and description of what outlines were to be taught, and stated that the word "outlines" meant a particular bay, a particular country, or particular States, or chief cities, then we should be met by the question—What do you mean by "chief city?" so that we should ultimately have to explain everything—what cape, or bay, or river, every boundary, every city, and so forth, while in fact we meant to leave that to the intelligence of the teachers. The phrase, as we left it, meant simply that they should not be required, as they had been before, to learn everything, but should select for themselves what was intended by the word "outline," or the leading features of importance in every study, whatever they might be. But while we are willing to concede that a little fuller definition of the term "outline" should have been given, it is, we must also claim, impossible for us to go into every detail of the studies; something must be left in this matter to the discretion and judgment of the teachers.

I come now to the discussion of the last resolution, which I will read:

*Resolved*, That, in the opinion of the Association, the strain on the health of class teachers is greatly increased by the fear of the annual examinations, and the marking of the results by the Superintendents; and that the strain is felt in some degree



by the pupils, in the extra drill and repetitions made necessary by this preparation.

Now, gentlemen, here is the sum and substance of these complaints. The teachers do not ask, as I understand it, that there should be no annual examination; I take it that that would be too great an innovation upon our system. No academies or colleges in the world can get along without such examinations; that is admitted. And these examinations sometimes take place once a month or once a quarter, but we say that they shall take place once a year. Now, gentlemen, shall we or can we abandon this annual examination? Was there ever a time when any of you did not look forward with fear to the annual examination? So far as I am concerned it was always so; although I do not think it is a blind selfish fear, but an anxiety. I do not think it was or is actual *fear*; I do not believe the teachers look forward to the Superintendents with any degree of fear, but they do, I think, look forward with anxiety, or an apprehension, that they may possibly fail. Now then, can we afford in the first place to dispense with these examinations? If you do dispense with our annual examination, I do not exactly see what necessity there is for our further services. But I do not put it on that ground; I take the position that these annual examinations are necessary, and in Boston, Philadelphia and other cities, where such examinations do not take place, they admit that their schools are not as good as they ought to be. All the visitors we have had amongst us from Europe and other countries have expressed their admiration of that system of examination which causes our teachers to look forward with such anxiety for the result. And this anxiety, in a great measure, is what has led to the attainment among the classes of the high average of about eighty per cent., so that the great fear is, now, that the teachers may not get marked high enough, and that the heart of some teacher will be broken at reaching ninety-nine and a half when she had expected to obtain one hundred per cent.

In regard to this question of the marking system, which came up some years ago before the Committee, and on which the Committee finally decided that the marking system should be abandoned and adjectives of degree used, as fair, good and excellent, what was the result? We went to the school afterwards and

found an utter listlessness among them. They seemed to have lost interest in the examinations, and said: How do we know the meaning of your terms, good, or fair, or excellent? Class after class failed entirely, and their teachers took no interest in the result, as to whether it was a failure or a success. They alleged they did not know whether they failed or not, and we found it subsequently advisable to come back to the old system, and almost immediately the interest of the teachers began to increase and marking ran up at a rapid rate.

It is said that it is impossible to make a mathematically correct calculation by the marking system. Undoubtedly it is! But when you find that Superintendents go from school to school and make these examinations, and you find that the examinations and their results are almost mathematically the same from year to year: and when you find also that the teachers themselves sit down and keep their record or list of marks themselves, with the Superintendent, and that they agree almost exactly, it is, I should think, fairly to be presumed that the officers can and do make a pretty fair examination of the schools from year to year. The results have been clearly shown to be beneficial, and my experience is, that if this system of marking is abolished, and the teachers do not know exactly how far they have gone in achieving the results for which they worked, you will find the schools running down, and a total lack of ambition or interest both among teachers and scholars. They will believe that if they succeed no one will ever know it, or that if they fail it will be also unknown, and the consequence will be, as it was before, an utter dilapidation of the whole system of scholarship, and we most certainly do not desire to reach that stage.

I believe, now, I have gone over the principal allegations that have been made, though somewhat briefly and probably imperfectly, but I think I have succeeded in showing, that if any of our efforts and best intentions fail, it is not the fault of the Board of Education or of the Course of Study. In reference, however, to the examination by the Superintendents, I will give a *resumé* of the facts and deductions from actual knowledge of the circumstances. It is, I think, pretty well known that we gave the teachers printed papers, or forms, in the first place, saying to them "We wish you to put down here every study that has

been pursued during the term; state how long you have had charge of the class; how many pupils in average attendance; the ages of the pupils, and *how far* have you gone in the studies." We do not ask them what the grade is at all, nor do we limit them to any particular course, or require them to mention a single study beyond what they know they have gone over. These teachers have had charge of these classes for six months, and they ought to know of what materials they are composed. We simply desire them to give us the results, and send them circulars beforehand, stating explicitly that we do not want to know *how far* they have gone in the Course or Grades, but *how well* they have succeeded; not what grade, but what have you done within the grade? Where they have had a class only four months, and have gone three-quarters through that grade, then we mark them as having gone three-quarters through that grade. The standing of the class is not made to depend upon the grade, but how far they have succeeded in that grade in which they are.

There is also one other thing in reference to this Course of Studies, and that is, that in no part of it is there any time limited. You shall not finish it before the expiration of six months—you shall pursue it as much longer as you choose. That is all. But when these teachers tell us that they are required to pursue nineteen different studies, they certainly do seem inclined to give the matter the very widest appearance and scope, and are very much like Falstaff's men in buckram. They have kept on adding until they footed up from nine to fourteen, and now from fourteen to nineteen. But we say to them, take as many studies as you have time to pursue, take that much, and take no more. If there are nineteen studies, you may take three years to do it in if you choose, and cannot go on faster, but it ought to be distinctly understood before this time that there is nothing compulsory as regards time.

I would like also to call the attention of your Committee to one or two pointed admissions made by the other side during this investigation:

Mr. SCOTT, in his opening address, states explicitly: "You will naturally expect us to answer, categorically, the question, "Do you believe that the physical energies of the pupils are over-

tasked?" So far as my experience and energies enable me to answer, I freely reply that I do not think they are; and so far from parents thinking their boys overtasked by excessive study, I beg leave to state that the constant complaint, in my own school as well as others, is, that they have not enough to do. Do you ask, Mr. Chairman, if we deem the present first grade too arduous for the pupils? So far as my enquiries extend, I am authorized to say that, without the change recommended, even as it at present stands—always excepting reviews—it is by no means overtasking."

And the same admission, substantially, is made by Miss Simms. In her argument she states, explicitly, "I think that we are not obliged, by the Board of Education, to take up all these subjects at once; we are not obliged to complete the course within a given period; we may take all the time we think necessary," and so on.

Now, this is undoubtedly true. Then, what becomes of the charges that they are required to take up all these nineteen studies they speak of, at one time? It is acknowledged by the representatives who have appeared here, that the Board of Education does not require it, and that the Course of Studies does not require it. If this be so—and it unquestionably is—who, then, does require that all these studies shall be undertaken, and taught, and studied, at one time? I have shown, already, that there is nothing in the action of the Board of Education, the Superintendent, or the Course of Studies, which gives any colorable pretence or foundation to the charges which have been made, and I have also attempted to prove, by the language used by the other side, that their views are, in nearly every one of these matters, erroneous.

But we find no further light thrown upon the subject, excepting through the remarks of Miss Loveridge and Mr. Carroll. They tell us that the difficulty exists largely in the ambition and anxiety of the Principals that their classes should reach a certain grade in a certain time, and accomplish a certain object. And here I must remark, that my own observations compel me to concur in the belief expressed by them. We do not require this overtasking; the Course of Studies does not require it; but the teachers or Principals do. So we are told, and I am not at

all in doubt that it is true. There is, of course, a Free Academy class to be prepared from the first grade, and the Principals inform their assistants that it is their business and their duty to push the class along rapidly in the grade, and that it is expected of them that they will so get them up in the grade that they will be prepared to furnish at once the Free Academy class. Now, for all this urging and overstraining, neither the Board, nor the Superintendents, can be considered actually responsible. We say not a word about grades, but the anxiety and ambition of teachers do. It is the grade they require, in substance, of their subordinate teachers. This question of the annual examination, and the "fear" experienced in regard to it, embraces and includes the whole subject and substance of the charges and complaints. Not that the assistants love this arduous duty themselves, but they cannot carry their classes to the extent desired by Principals, parents, and others, unless they study an undue number of hours.

Now, all that we have to do to counteract its evil effects is, to prohibit it, and see that the teachers shall take their own time to teach their classes, and shall not be hurried forward by the undue wishes of their Principals, in their labors. In other words, that they shall not be required to "make bricks without straw." Now, it undoubtedly appears to me, that this all grows out of the anxiety of teachers to accomplish a greater amount of work than they can properly do. They wish that the grade should be as high as possible, and they are insensibly impelled to push forward their pupils to work for which they are inadequate.

And I would here thank Miss Loveridge and Mr. Carroll for having called attention distinctly to that fact. There have been no other facts brought to bear in this investigation which tend so strongly to point out the errors of which complaint has been made as the suggestions by the persons I have just named.

We should not be called upon to shatter down our noble system of instruction, which we have tested and found favorable for so long, and which has been so admired by all other States and countries, simply because principals or teachers of schools require work to be done which cannot be accomplished within the time they desire, and then come here and complain that it



is the result of a course of studies, that has not yet been fairly tested, and require that it should be cut down, that all our reviews and examinations be given up, that every test of scholarship should be cast aside, because it will result to the advantage of the complainants, even though it results in injury to the cause of education.

These are our views, gentlemen, and we ask you to examine them in connection with the facts alleged by the other side of the house. We allege that it is not the result of, or by means of, any action of the Board of Education, the Course of Studies, or the Superintendents, that these errors and grievances have ever existed, and a comparison of views would have no other effect than to strengthen this conviction. I believe I have said nearly all I have the strength to say, and most respectfully leave it with you, after having heard my colleagues, to determine whether the Board of Education, its Committees, or the teachers themselves or their Principals are in fault.

On the conclusion of Superintendent Randall's address, the Chairman introduced Superintendent KIDDLE, who continued the discussion, as follows :

Mr. CHAIRMAN,—When the resolution, under which your Honorable Committee was appointed, was adopted by the Board of Education, I greatly rejoiced, because I hoped that such an investigation would be made into the statements comprised in that resolution, as would remove the indefiniteness, uncertainty, and obscurity in which, hitherto, they have always been involved, and thus lead to the entire removal of the evils to which they pointed. This resolution was based upon "complaint," said to be "made by parents of children that attend the Public Schools, and by many others interested in public education in this city, that the course of studies pursued in the schools, the number of studies, the rules governing their acquisition and teaching, and the time required for their completion, are too arduous, and cause serious injury to the physical and mental energies of both teachers and pupils." And on this resolution your Committee are instructed to obtain "all available information on the subject," and particularly as to the "amount of labor performed by the teachers, and the time devoted to study by the pupils."

I would respectfully suggest, that this *complaint* should be particularly inquired into, so as to be established or dismissed ; and particularly that its exact extent and magnitude may be ascertained ; for otherwise, it will be at once apparent to you that there is nothing to be investigated—as the lawyers say, there is no *corpus delicti* ; and we are in danger of fighting a “man of straw.” It is not enough that the teachers say that they are oppressed by their duties and terrified by their responsibilities ; of course, (I say it with no disrespect to them,) it is their *interest* to say this ; and being interested parties, their statements are, by no means, to be taken as conclusive evidence of the fact. That their labors are arduous, no one admits more freely than myself ; but so are those of all connected with this system, and also of many other classes of the community, any of whom, if invited to expose their grievances, and exhibit their burdens, would present a case equally hard with that which has been so vividly depicted in these large, enthusiastic, and intelligent assemblies, which, although composed of these shattered victims of oppression, present an appearance of health and vigor, both of body and mind, unsurpassed, as I am proud to feel, by any other class of our citizens that could be brought together. Hence the statements emanating from this source, however fortified by presumed unanimous resolutions—passed in duly constituted assemblies—must be accepted, and treated as the statements of interested parties,—not necessarily untrue or incorrect, but at least highly-colored by that natural and inevitable bias which always attaches to whatever affects our own personal comfort or pecuniary prosperity. Sir, if the resolution had kindly embraced an inquiry into the labors and duties which “cause serious injury to the physical and mental energies” of your humble servants, the Superintendents, I entertain not the slightest doubt that they likewise would have been enabled to present a case, which would have invoked for them very much genuine and heartfelt sympathy. But we are compelled for the present, at least, to suffer in silence, and are even patient in being made the *convenient* (though I cannot say altogether *willing*) instruments of exciting a sympathy for others.

But, sir, I had anticipated hearing also from those “*many others*, interested in the cause of education,” as well as the

“parents,” who, as *disinterested* parties, would have borne specific testimony with regard to the abuse referred to in the resolution—and the particular offenders (other than your humble servants, the Superintendents) concerned in its perpetration and maintenance. But I have been disappointed, and am now called upon to vindicate the system against charges which, I am free to say, rest at present, at least, on no adequate testimony. This great system of education—the pride and boast of our city and State—a system which has received so many eulogiums from sources of the highest intelligence and respectability, has been placed on trial, held up to public odium, and brought to the very verge of condemnation, by charges and testimony which, in their generality, vagueness, and insufficiency, would be inadequate to convict the pettiest criminal of the smallest offense known to the law. Yet here she sits behind the felon’s bar—humiliated by her own friends, brought to shame by those who should have protected her,—all her faults, however trivial, exposed to the idle and scoffing gaze of the multitude,—her magnificent robes torn to shreds by her own thoughtless children. Most appropriately may I cite, in this connection, those magnificent lines of Byron :

So the struck eagle stretched upon the plain  
No more through rolling clouds to soar again,  
Viewed his own feather in the fatal dart,  
And winged the shaft that quivered in his heart,  
Keen were his pangs; but keener far to feel,  
He nursed the pinions that impelled the steel,  
While the same plumage that had warmed his nest,  
Drank the last life-drop from his bleeding breast.

May God grant that she be acquitted of these charges, and be permitted to stand forth again with spotless reputation and unsullied dignity.

And, sir, that such may be the case, I proceed to examine the accusations, and to vindicate the substantial efficiency and general excellence of the schools, to whose supervision I have unsparingly devoted, I may truthfully say, the twelve best years of my life.

The first point to be considered, is the “Overtasking of the pupils.” This, although of paramount importance, has been

treated as a secondary matter when compared with the severe trials and hardships to which our earnest, painstaking, and devoted teachers are subjected.

Are the pupils overtasked? Says one of the delegates\* (page 6 of the printed record): "The Male Principals believe that there is a great strain now exerted on the mental and physical energies of *teachers* and pupils." But on page 14, he remarks, addressing the Committee: "You will *naturally* expect us to answer categorically the question—'Do you believe that the physical energies of pupils are overtasked?' *We naturally* answer for the Male Grammar Schools, and for these alone: 'So far as *my* own experience and *energies* enable *me* to answer, *I* very freely reply that *I* do not think they are. And, so far from parents thinking their boys overtasked by excessive study, *I* beg leave to state that the constant complaint in *my* own school, *as well as others*, is, that they have not enough to do. So far from asking that the amount of home-work should be reduced, in the *lower grades*, there are *many Principals* who think it might be judiciously increased.'" Now, this is not very clear testimony in behalf of the Male Principals, nor is the answer very "definite" or "categorical;" but certainly it does not testify to the truth of the statement made previously in behalf of the same Male Principals, that the physical energies of *pupils*, at least, are overtasked. Nor, as a general thing, do I think they are, either in the Male or Female Grammar Schools. There are, undoubtedly, cases of the kind occurring daily in the schools, and, indeed, it would be surprising if there were not, in a system so vast as ours; but I believe they are exceptional, and by no means sufficiently numerous to justify the outcry that has been raised against the system. But, however few, they ought not to be permitted; and if there be any means possible to prevent entirely their occurrence, resort should be had to such means. While, however, all are not gifted with perfect discretion and unlimited intelligence, my opinion is, that in spite of all legislation, such cases must sometimes occur. A teacher will, occasionally, err in assigning lessons, and thus over-

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\* D. B. Scott.

task the pupils ; and solitary instances of this kind are very apt to lead to incorrect views of the general requirements of the schools, and bring about a false impression as to the character of the system. The human mind tends to generalize too rapidly, and leaps to a conclusion before sufficient facts have been collected on which to base a correct opinion. A parent finds his child laboring to acquire home-tasks of excessive length, and instead of going to the school and finding out the cause, inveighs against the teachers as a body, and the schools as a system ; while, if he had seen the teacher, he might have discovered that, perhaps, the child had been placed in a class of too high a grade ; and the simple request to have the pupil put into a lower grade would have removed the difficulty. This, however, parents will rarely consent to, expecting rather that the tasks should be brought down to the level of their children's capacity, without regard to that of other children. Physicians also very often form erroneous impressions of the management of the schools, from seeing one or two pupils injured in health, perhaps from the cause referred to, or presumed to have been thus injured. The experience of physicians with respect to a matter of this kind must necessarily be one-sided, and hence their testimony should be taken with considerable allowance. Let the cases be made known, and the particular facts be inquired into ; and my experience goes to show that, in most cases, it will be found that the studies have had nothing whatever to do with the child's loss of health ; or if they have, that the parents alone are responsible in permitting their children to attend school when their condition of health required them to be withdrawn altogether.

Nevertheless, there are, undoubtedly, as there always have been, cases of the kind referred to, where the pupils have been oppressed with severe home-tasks ; and the fact has been repeatedly reported to the Board by myself and others of the Superintendents. Thus, in my Annual Report to the Board made in 1857, (more than ten years ago,) the following passage occurs : " One very serious evil, resulting from a too exclusive dependence on lessons and recitations, is the requirement from the pupils of an excessive amount of study out of school. In one school, on inquiring how many lessons the pupils were required



to study in this way, I was informed, sufficient to occupy four or five hours of each day—thus rendering it necessary for boys of from twelve to sixteen years of age to spend nearly one-half of the twenty-four hours in the confinement of the recitation-room, or in poring over books, restricting the means of recreation and exercise, so imperatively necessary, especially during the early periods of life, preventing their healthy, physical development, irremediably undermining their constitutions, and inflicting upon them a future existence not only of bodily pain and disease, but perhaps of mental prostration and imbecility. It is not supposed that the time generally required for home study is at all equal to this; but there is a strong tendency in many of the schools, and especially in the higher classes, to exact an amount oppressive to the pupils' energies and injurious to their health."

The Course of Study at that time was indeed a very oppressive one, more than twice as many branches being required to be pursued simultaneously as are now prescribed for the Grammar School Course; and to remove the evil referred to it was, on the recommendation of the Superintendents, greatly modified, and the amount of study very much reduced.

On the second of November, 1864, a resolution was adopted by the Board of Education directing the Committee on Course of Studies and School Books "to examine and report whether the present system of instruction in the Grammar Schools is not calculated to interfere with the proper mental and physical development of the pupils." And the Committee subsequently reported, "that from the attention they had been able to give the subject, and the information obtained, they were led to believe that, while *the system, as a whole, was not chargeable with such influence*, yet in some cases, and as administered in some schools, it was made to operate so as to impair, very seriously, both the mental and physical health of the pupils." To sustain this conclusion they stated many important facts having reference to the improper manner in which some of the Principals administered, or rather persistently violated, the rules of the Board. Many of the abuses mentioned in this Report, and which it was hoped that the subsequent legislation of the Board had forever removed, we find, from the testimony of the assistant teachers presented to your Committee, are still in existence; and

while Principals send their representatives here to inveigh against the Course of Study as the cause of excessive burdens to the teachers and pupils, they themselves are wilfully violating the wholesome regulations of the Board designed to prevent this abuse—an abuse for which the Course of Study, if properly applied, can in no case be responsible. If this charge of the assistant teachers be sustained—and I myself can testify in part, at least, to its truth—the offenders should be promptly made to answer for the offense before this Committee and the Board of Education. Sir, they have been wilful in thus violating the rules of the Board beyond all precedent; for they have been warned of this fault year after year in the Reports of the Superintendents, by special legislation of the Board, of which they have been duly notified, and more particularly by the Report of 1864, before referred to, which specified particularly this departure from sound and judicious policy.

The following extract from that Report will clearly show this fact :

“ A very prolific source of injury to the pupils is the erroneous impression existing in the minds of some of the Principals of Grammar Schools, that every class ought, in accordance with the rules of the Board, to be of a specific grade; that is, that the first class should be of the first grade, the second class of the second grade, and so on. In order to effect this, pupils are frequently promoted to grades of study for which they are inadequately prepared, and which are beyond their age and capacity. From the operation of this cause, pupils of nine or ten years of age are often forced to attempt the study of the most difficult branches prescribed by the Board; of course, to the serious detriment of their mental and bodily organizations. No proper discrimination is made as to the age of the pupils, in this promotion from grade to grade, such discrimination, it is alleged, being prevented by the determination of parents that their children, irrespective of age, shall be urged forward as fast as other pupils in the same class; and as opposition to such determination would result in a loss of the pupil, and his admission into another school more compliant, the pupil is promoted. Your Committee have found nothing in the By-Laws of the Board requiring that any class should be of a particular grade. The Course of Study and its accompanying provisions, are, indeed, obligatory upon all; but these only enjoin a particular *order* of subjects and topics, and leave it entirely to circumstances to determine what time shall be given to the completion

of the whole course, or of any one of the grades into which it is divided. This division of the Course into specific grades appears not to be designed at all to prescribe that classes of equal *rank* in different schools shall be of the same *grade*. To require such a uniformity would be prejudicial to the best interests of the pupils. In one school the pupils of the first class, for example, may be, on the average, only twelve years of age, while in another, those of the corresponding class may be fourteen years old; and it would obviously be both inconsistent and injurious to assign the same studies, or expect an equal degree of advancement from both.

Your Committee are, however, led to believe that the Principals of the Grammar Schools do not discriminate sufficiently as to the age and capacity of the pupils, but, from the impression above referred to, urge them over the whole course with a haste which interferes seriously with their proper mental and physical development.

Those who do not urge, as an excuse for this disregard of sound principles of education, any positive requirements of the Board, plead the force of circumstances as their justification, alleging that any inferiority of grade in their classes leads to a loss of standing with the local School Officers as well as with the parents of the pupils, the latter resulting in a diminished attendance, and that thus the maintenance of their schools depends upon the cramming and overtaking of their pupils.

This evil has frequently been brought to the attention of the Board, which has endeavored to guard against it by appropriate legislation. Promotions from grade to grade have been strictly prohibited, unless preceded by a thorough review of the studies passed through by the pupil, and unless all the studies of the lower grade were completed. This by-law is still in force, and the Committee would suggest that a remedy for the above described is to be found in a more strict enforcement of this provision of the law. Careful investigation should be made into the manner in which pupils are promoted to the higher grades, and all violations of the rule reported to the Board should receive its prompt attention.

The excuse that parents demand that this injury should be done to their children, your Committee do not deem a valid one; since it cannot be expected that our great system of popular education can be properly carried on by acceding, in all cases, to the wishes of parents, and certainly not when they come in conflict with sound and judicious rules—rules the violation of which results in an entire perversion of all the wholesome agencies brought to bear upon the education of the child. Every effort, on the other hand, should be made to enlighten these parents as to the true interests of their children,

and to induce them to yield their willing assent to the salutary restrictions imposed by the Board. Where this cannot be done, it is very much to be regretted that our system should be found so deficient in uniformity of administration, that the firm and wholesome practice of one school should be neutralized by weak and improper compliance in another. The vigor and efficiency of the system depend so much upon this unity of policy and uniformity of operation, that its agents of every class should be carefully admonished as to the proper discharge of their duties, and a thorough concert of action arranged and agreed upon by the local Boards of School Officers. At present, it is very much to be feared that, in the competition for an increased attendance of pupils, very injudicious practices are often permitted, and some of the most necessary rules of the Board disregarded."

Since the date of this Report rules have been made, and particularly in connection with the present Course of Study, designed to check this reckless manner of making promotions, with the view of keeping up the show of a high grade, in spite of circumstances which render it absolutely impossible; and, sir, the vehemence with which this Course of Study has been attacked by some Principals, leads me to believe that this "forcing process" must be effectually checked by that Course and the regulations connected with it. Almost every Report that has emanated from our Department, every recommendation made for a modification of the Course of Study, or the passage of by-laws to enforce it, goes to show that our observations had detected this evil, and that we were desirous to put a stop to it. The history of the Course of Study and its modifications for nearly ten years, as I will hereafter show, proves that the cure of this evil was the great end and aim of these changes, and forcibly illustrates how hard it has been to effectuate this desirable result.

Excessive home-tasks are the necessary consequence of injudicious and hurried promotions. The assistant teachers, urged by the Principals to accomplish in a few months what, according to the rules of the Board, should require a year or more, are compelled to assign lessons of inordinate length, which prove especially burdensome to such pupils as are below the average grade of the class, or are somewhat inferior in intellectual capacity.

This subject of excessive home-tasks also received the atten-

tion of the Committee of 1864 ; and in the Report already quoted they thus speak of it :

“ It has been shown, by evidence presented to your Committee, that the lessons assigned for home-study are often excessive, both in number and length ; and that thus the pupils are compelled to perform an amount of study so great as to overtask their mental energies, and to deprive them of the time needed for physical exercise and recreation. This evil seems to exist principally in the Female Grammar Schools, and more especially in the higher classes of the same. According to the reports submitted by the Principals of some of these schools, it appears that pupils are required to prepare eleven or twelve lessons daily, involving an amount of study which certainly could not be performed in less than five or six hours, and even then must be very imperfectly accomplished ; and that where the lessons assigned are less in number, they are often so long and difficult that the pupils are obliged to devote the same excessive amount of time to their preparation.

Your Committee have found nothing in the requisitions of the Board which renders it necessary to impose these severe mental burdens upon the pupils, and can only account for this practice on the supposition that an unhealthy and unwise competition exists among the schools with reference to mere grade, and irrespective of what truly constitutes sound educational advancement. The examining officers demand, it is true, that pupils, when presented as of a particular grade, shall show an intelligent acquaintance and a thorough familiarity with the subjects prescribed for that grade ; but, as your Committee have been informed, and as appears by the printed circulars of the City Superintendent, the time for the completion of each grade, and more especially of the higher grades, has been invariably left to the judgment and decision of the Principal of the school.\* \* \* \*

\* \* \* \* “ The practice of transferring the legitimate work of the class-room to the home of the pupil, and thus imposing upon parents a labor which it is the particular duty of the teacher to perform, requires, as it has often received, the severe reprehension of the Board. The By-Laws require that every lesson shall be carefully taught or explained to the pupils, the home-work being a review of what has been thus taught or the preparation of exercise designed to impress it more deeply upon the pupil's mind. Where, however, a large number of lessons are assigned, the teacher's work necessarily degenerates into the mere hearing of recitations, no time being spared for instruction, which the pupils must either dispense with or depend for it upon their parents or others at home. The preference for hearing recitations to actual



instruction appears, in some cases, to be most remarkable. Lessons are sometimes assigned, even in mental arithmetic—a branch the sole value of which consists in its spontaneity, so to speak, as a mental exercise; and which, when conned over at home and recited from memory to teacher, becomes not only useless, but absurd.”

When the manner in which promotions are made in the schools is considered, (and the general testimony of the assistants presented at the last meeting of the Committee proves that it is sometimes inconsiderate and improper to the last degree,) the cause of all the difficulties complained of becomes apparent. In order that this, as well as all other matters pertaining to the general management of the schools, should be carefully and faithfully attended to, the Principals have, with very few exceptions, been released from all other duties; and yet I am occasionally informed by assistants that the classes are never examined for promotion, but placed into higher grades upon the mere presumption that they are properly prepared, and, according to the testimony presented to you at the previous meeting, sometimes against the earnest protest of the teacher who is to take charge of the class. You have been also told that pupils of different grades, or divisions of a grade, are mingled together, thus forming a confused mass, which the teacher is required, within a stated period, to bring into a uniform grade, and that often far in advance of what should be expected. Thus, in very many schools, boys have been carried over the first grade of the Grammar School Course and the second of the Supplementary Course between September of one year and July of the next—whereas, by the present regulations, this should occupy two years. No wonder, then, that pupils prepared in this superficial way often disgrace the schools by the deficiency which they exhibit at the examinations for admissions into the College. I must say, I have been greatly astonished at the vehemence with which the present first grade has been assailed, requiring, as it does, a year's study, when I know that twice the amount of work prescribed for that grade has very generally and *voluntarily* been attempted by teachers—on the principle, I suppose, which was quoted by one of the lady representatives at the last meeting—“better fail in a high grade than succeed in a low one.”

Where the Principal lays it down as indispensable that there must be in his or her school a certain number of classes in the Supplementary Grade, a certain number in the First Grade, and so on, and that there shall not be, under whatever circumstances, any of the lowest grade, there must be excessive burdens to be borne by both teachers and pupils—and the former attempting an almost impossible task, must naturally “fear” the Superintendents, whose duty it is to see that the work is done thoroughly and properly—that what has been attempted has been successfully performed. But, Sir, the dreaded 74 per cent. is not the only “terror” for teachers in such a case; this they might justify by a simple statement of the facts—but by doing so they would incur the displeasure of their Principals, and this is no light matter, in some instances, as I have had the means of knowing. It is gratifying to witness the Principals of schools acting and speaking here as the generous champions of their oppressed subordinates; but it would be still more gratifying to know that their rule at home, in their own schools, had always similar characteristics of kindness and sympathy. That this is very generally so I cheerfully testify—but there appears in certain schools so intense an atmosphere of terror, produced by the iron rule of the Principal, that it is painful to examine the classes, and impossible to obtain from the teachers, except by the most minute interrogations, anything like a full statement of the facts bearing on their classes and their work. So much for the “crushing weight” and the “fixed arrow” of the Superintendents’ examinations and marks.

The Assistants say that “the making of promotions into classes without sufficient regard to the fitness of the pupils, is a cause that makes the work of pupils and teachers too severe” There cannot be the least doubt that such a cause must produce the effects specified. The question arises, does this cause generally exist? I answer, that as far as my observation has enabled me to know, I do not think that, at the present time, it is by any means *general*. The charge made by the assistants is altogether too sweeping. I was sorry to hear it brought in this general way. It is true, one of them concerned in this presentment, says, “These remarks are not intended for a universal, it *may* not be a general, application. Where they *fit* they will strike

home, and it may be that their *object* may be detected in the *flutter they may create*." Now, as I observed, no "flutter," either general or individual, I cannot believe this terrible rebuke is widely applicable; and perhaps the "object" designed to be "struck home" might not have been much hurt after all. There is no doubt that in some cases the "reckless rule of ambition" will have paramount control, instead of being kept in subservience to conscience and right; but from this, as a general imputation, I feel it my duty to defend those who have the management of the schools. They are zealous, sometimes, indeed, excessively so; they naturally desire to keep up their reputation, and that of their schools; and far be it from any of us to desire the extinction of laudable ambition, and substitute that sluggish indifference in which all might repose upon beds of down, unawakened by a single care or anxiety. The Principals have troubles of their own; their task is a peculiarly difficult one, and more especially in regard to this matter of classification. It must, to some extent, be imperfect; and where it is forced, my observation has generally convinced me that the assistants were almost always *participes criminis*. Sir, in my humble opinion, this investigation, dealing as it has with vague and general charges, instead of specific facts, has done great injustice, and has, I am afraid, created an entirely false impression as to the general management of the schools. There are inefficient and injudicious Principals, and there are ill-trained, indolent, apathetic assistants—teachers who would do nothing without some powerful incentive, very different from the mere wish conscientiously to discharge their duties. These naturally feel, with the greatest concern, the requisitions of the Superintendents and Principals; and sometimes to save themselves from censure, or to rescue themselves from deserved mediocrity, hold out the idea that there is a "conflict" between the Superintendents and Principals as to these requirements, when the truth is, sometimes the conflict exists only in their own minds between the *much they ought to do* and the *little they would like to have to do*. And with such teachers it is always the case, that the pupils who fail are invariably the best scholars, and *vice versa*; and should any happen to be absent on the day of examination, they are the most brilliant in the class, and, had they been present,

would have added ten or fifteen per cent. to the average result of the examination.

Now, it would be shocking to the intelligence of every one who has ever given any attention to our system, to assert that these represent the great mass of the teachers in our schools, or to pronounce the Principals, as a body, inefficient or recklessly indiscreet. It is not so. A more faithful corps of teachers than ours, I am sure cannot be found; and notwithstanding the formidable series of resolutions presented to you as emanating from this body, calling for every conceivable change—if abolition is change—I deny that this is the general sentiment of the teachers, and call for the proof:—Who attended these meetings? Who stayed away? By what vote were these resolutions passed? How far are these papers, so carefully drawn up, the mere statement of the writer's own opinions—sometimes, indeed, bolstered up by special and leading interrogatories, addressed to parties individually, in order to elicit statements, which, collectively, they had never thought of uttering? Can a resolution passed at a meeting of fifty teachers, by a majority of *two*, rightly represent the sentiments of three or four hundred teachers, some of whom never heard of the meeting? Let not then these statements, able and plausible as some of them are, be considered the utterance of the general voice, but let them receive such attention, and have such weight, as their own intrinsic importance may warrant, and no more.

Now, Sir, let me briefly recapitulate the points of objection made by the different classes of teachers who have appeared before you: 1. They have too much work—(a very general complaint.) 2. The Course of Study is defective, being indefinite and oppressive in its requirements, especially as to reviews. 3. The Superintendents' examinations and numerical record of results are productive of annoyance and unnecessary anxiety, and particularly in holding teachers responsible for the work of preceding grades. And 4. (On the part of the assistants,) the admissions and promotions are carelessly or injudiciously made.

This last cause of complaint I have already examined; and it will be at once apparent that if this is as alleged, the system is not responsible for it, since it has provided rules to prevent it; and since it is only by the violation of these rules, on the part

of those who administer the internal affairs of the schools, that this evil can exist.

The complaint on the part of the *Principals*, that the teachers are overworked, is easily disposed of. It may be justly said to them, do as the regulations of the Board provide: remove the burdens you yourselves have imposed upon your subordinates; be not so eager for a high grade—so desirous to have a supplementary class, or a crowd of pupils prepared for the Introductory Class of the College, or for the reputation of being able, and *exclusively able*, to prepare boys for the Freshman Class of the College. Give your subordinates a more liberal allowance of time for the work you assign them. The rule gives you unlimited authority in this respect; if one year is not enough you may take more, provided you do not weakly comply with the exactions of unreasonable and unthinking parents, or as weakly succumb to circumstances which your duty imperatively requires that you should control. Answer not, as some of you have answered, “We cannot keep our scholars!” as if that were a proper reason for continuing the “unhealthful strain” against which you inveigh. If your pupils must leave you previous to the completion of the entire course, let them, at least, leave with some solid and permanent acquisitions, and with their bodily constitutions unimpaired by your unwise conduct. Is a “graduating diploma” an equivalent for the wreck of body and mind? And when you look around you and see these unhappy victims of this “unhealthful strain,” will it satisfy your conscience to reflect that you, at least, saved your “Graduating Class?” Sir, the system cannot be held responsible for this abuse; it has successively legislated to prevent it, and it only requires a judicious and exact obedience to existing provisions of law to render its existence utterly impossible. I cannot refrain from expressing my surprise that, under these circumstances, this complaint should have emanated from such a source. It cannot be said that the Superintendents have encouraged this haste, for their uniform policy has been never to exact any specific amount of progress in a given time, knowing, as they do, that this must greatly vary with circumstances, which only those intimately acquainted with the pupils can understand. Hence the classes have never been examined beyond the limit fixed by their own



teachers ; and in the case of the First Grade and Supplementary Classes, the time for examination has invariably been assigned by the Principals themselves—the Superintendents only going to examine for promotion and graduation when they are asked to do so, and sometimes only after a very urgent application. At my special recommendation, some of the graduating classes this season have postponed their examination until the autumn, in order to give the pupils additional time. The theory is, that classes should always be ready for incidental *inspection*, but for *promotion and graduation* only when their teachers are willing to present them as properly prepared. Of course, if there were negligence or inefficiency in thus preparing them, it would be discovered and corrected by the incidental inspection.

The complaint *on the part of the assistants* that they are over-worked, is based upon—1. The unreasonable demands of the Principals ; and 2. The excessive requirements of the Course of Study. The first of these has been already examined ; the second I now proceed to consider. Before doing so, it will be proper briefly to review the history of the successive Courses of Study prescribed for these schools.

Under the Public School Society, the Course, at first, provided for nothing more than reading, writing, and arithmetic ; subsequently, geography was introduced, then grammar, and afterwards astronomy, history, geometry, trigonometry, book-keeping, &c. In the Ward Schools, under the charge of the Board of Education, as first constituted, until the consolidation of the two classes of schools was effected, the Course prescribed the study of specific text-books, and defined the number of pages of each to be learned in the several grades. The first Course, prescribed in 1853 for all the schools, contained the following requirements for *five classes* :

## COURSE OF STUDY—No. 1.

*Adopted by Board of Education in 1853.*

N. B.—The Dash indicates the continuance of the study in the subsequent Grades.

|   | 5th Class.   | 4th Class. | 3d Class.         | 2d Class.   | 1st Class.         |
|---|--------------|------------|-------------------|-------------|--------------------|
| 1 | Reading.     | _____      | _____             | _____       | _____              |
| 2 | Spelling.    | _____      | _____             | _____       | _____              |
| 3 | Definitions. | _____      | _____             | _____       | _____              |
| 4 | Arithmetic.  | _____      | _____             | _____       | _____              |
| 5 | Geography.   | _____      | _____             | _____       | _____              |
|   | 6            | Astronomy. | _____             | _____       | _____              |
|   | 7            | Grammar.   | _____             | _____       | _____              |
|   |              | 8          | History U. S.     | _____       | _____              |
|   |              | 9          | Natural Philos'y. | _____       | _____              |
|   |              | 10         | " History.        | _____       | _____              |
|   |              |            | 11                | Mineralogy. | Geometry.          |
|   |              |            | 12                | Chemistry.  | Book-keeping.      |
|   |              |            | 13                | Geology.    | General History.   |
|   |              |            | 14                | Physiology. | _____              |
|   |              |            | 15                | Algebra.    | _____              |
|   |              |            |                   | 16          | Constitution U. S. |

Here we see that grammar as well as astronomy was commenced in the next to the lowest class, and that the second class was required to pursue fifteen branches of study, and the first, sixteen. This Course was abolished in 1859, and the following seven grades adopted in its place :

## COURSE OF STUDY—No. 2.

*Adopted 1859.*

|   | 7th Grade.   | 6th Grade. | 5th Grade. | 4th Grade.    | 3d Grade. | 2d Grade.  | 1st Grade.    |
|---|--------------|------------|------------|---------------|-----------|------------|---------------|
| 1 | Reading.     | _____      | _____      | _____         | _____     | _____      | _____         |
| 2 | Spelling.    | _____      | _____      | _____         | _____     | _____      | _____         |
| 3 | Definitions. | _____      | _____      | _____         | _____     | _____      | _____         |
| 4 | Arithmetic.  | _____      | _____      | _____         | _____     | _____      | _____         |
| 5 | Geography.   | _____      | _____      | _____         | _____     | Omitted.   | _____         |
|   |              | 6          | Grammar.   | _____         | _____     | _____      | _____         |
|   |              |            | 7          | History U. S. | _____     | _____      | _____         |
|   |              |            |            |               | 7         | Astronomy. | _____         |
|   |              |            |            |               | 8         | Nat. Phil. | _____         |
|   |              |            |            |               | 9         | Algebra.   | _____         |
|   |              |            |            |               |           | 9          | Book-keeping. |
|   |              |            |            |               |           | 10         | Const'n U. S. |
|   |              |            |            |               |           | 11         | Gen. History. |
|   |              |            |            |               |           | 12         | Chemistry.    |
|   |              |            |            |               |           | 13         | Physiology.   |
|   |              |            |            |               |           | 14         | Nat. Phil.    |

This Course, it will at once be perceived, was much more reasonable in its requirements than its predecessor, and would have worked well, but for the determination of every school, in whatever circumstances, and whatever the age of the pupils, to have a *First Grade*; and there being no limitation with respect to time, as at present, it was found practically impossible to prevent the overtaking of the pupils, some of whom, although under thirteen years of age, I often found pursuing all the advanced studies prescribed for the highest grade, which it was originally designed should only be undertaken by a very few schools, so situated as to be able to keep their scholars long enough to do this properly. This design however was thwarted, as I have said, by the fear, on the part of the teachers, that they would be considered, by some one, *second-rate* teachers, and their schools *second-rate* schools.

To remedy this evil, and to enable every school to have a *First Grade*, I recommended the plan of a Supplementary Course, in which all the advanced subjects might be taught, as a substitute for the prescribed First Grade, thus practically reducing the requirements of the Course one degree. This proposition was adopted in 1863, and the Course was then as follows :

### COURSE OF STUDY—No. 3,

*Adopted 1863.*

|   | 6th Grade.   | 5th Grade. | 4th Grade. | 3d Grade.     | 2d Grade.  | 1st Grade.                        | Supplementary   |
|---|--------------|------------|------------|---------------|------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1 | Reading.     | _____      | _____      | _____         | _____      | _____                             | _____   |
| 2 | Spelling.    | _____      | _____      | _____         | _____      | _____                             | _____   |
| 3 | Definitions. | _____      | _____      | _____         | _____      | _____                             | _____   |
| 4 | Arithmetic.  | _____      | _____      | _____         | _____      | _____                             | _____   |
| 5 | Geography.   | _____      | _____      | _____         | _____      | _____                             | Omitted.  |
|   |              | 6          | Grammar.   | _____         | _____      | _____ with<br>Composition.        | _____   |
|   |              |            | 7          | History U. S. | _____      | _____                             | Omitted.  |
|   |              |            |            | 8             | Etymology. | _____                             | _____   |
|   |              |            |            | 9             | Algebra.   | _____                             | _____   |
|   |              |            |            |               | 10         | { Astronomy or<br>Book-keeping. } | { Astronomy.<br>Geometry.<br>Nat. Phil.<br>Gen. History.<br>Rhetoric. |

The Committee of 1864, finding that many of the teachers required all of the studies of the Supplementary Course to be pursued simultaneously, and thus overtasked the pupils, recommended the division of this course into two grades, and prescribed a period of at least one year for the completion of each. In 1866, the Course was modified so as to relieve the pupils of the Female Grammar Schools from some of the mathematical requirements. It then stood as follows :

## COURSE OF STUDY—No. 4.

*Adopted 1866.*

|   | 6th Grade.   | 5th Grade. | 4th Grade.      | 3d Grade. | 2d Grade.     | 1st Grade.             |
|---|--------------|------------|-----------------|-----------|---------------|------------------------|
| 1 | Reading.     | _____      | _____           | _____     | _____         | _____                  |
| 2 | Spelling.    | _____      | _____           | _____     | _____         | _____                  |
| 3 | Definitions. | _____      | With Etymology. | _____     | _____         | _____                  |
| 4 | Arithmetic.  | _____      | _____           | _____     | _____         | _____                  |
| 5 | Geography.   | _____      | _____           | _____     | _____         | _____                  |
|   |              | 6          | Grammar.        | _____     | _____         | _____ With             |
|   |              |            |                 | 7         | History U. S. | Physical Geog.         |
|   |              |            |                 |           | 8             | Etymology.             |
|   |              |            |                 |           | 9             | Alg. (for Boys.) Boys. |
|   |              |            |                 |           |               | 10                     |
|   |              |            |                 |           |               | Astronomy.             |
|   |              |            |                 |           |               | 11                     |
|   |              |            |                 |           |               | Cons. U. S.—           |
|   |              |            |                 |           |               | (Boys.)                |
|   |              |            |                 |           |               | 12                     |
|   |              |            |                 |           |               | Book-keeping.          |


The Supplementary Course, prescribed in connection with this Course, remained as before, excepting that there was also prescribed a special Supplementary Course for the Male Grammar Schools. This Course, with the view to simplify and lighten still more the requirements, was farther modified at the close of last year, and the amended Course is that at present in operation. It may be represented as follows :



## COURSE OF STUDY—No. 5.

*Adopted Dec.. 1867.*

|   | 7th Grade,<br>Half Year. | 6th Grade,<br>Half Year. | 5th Grade,<br>Half Year. | 4th Grade,<br>Half Year. | 3d Grade,<br>Half Year. | 2d Grade,<br>Half Year. | 1st Grade,<br>One Year.    |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | Reading.                 | _____                    | _____                    | _____                    | _____                   | _____                   | _____                      |
| 2 | Spelling.                | _____                    | _____                    | _____                    | _____                   | _____                   | _____                      |
| 3 | Definitions.             | _____                    | _____ with<br>Etymology. | _____                    | _____                   | _____                   | _____                      |
| 4 | Arithmetic.              | _____                    | _____                    | _____                    | _____                   | _____                   | _____                      |
| 5 | Geography.               | _____                    | _____                    | _____                    | _____                   | _____                   | _____ with<br>Phys. Geog.  |
|   |                          | 6 Grammar,<br>(Oral.)    | _____                    | _____                    | _____ (with<br>book.)   | _____                   | _____ with<br>Composition. |
|   |                          |                          |                          | 7 History U. S.          | 8 Etymology.            | 9 Astronomy.            |                            |

 In addition to the above, Oral Lessons on “Common Things” and “Familiar Science” are prescribed for each grade.

## SUPPLEMENTARY COURSE.

| FOR MALES. |                       |                       | FOR FEMALES. |                     |                     |
|------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------|---------------------|---------------------|
|            | 2d Grade—1 Year.      | 1st Grade—1 Year.     |              | 2d Grade—1 Year.    | 1st Grade—1 Year.   |
| 1          | Reading.              | Grammar.              | 1            | Arithmetic.         | Grammar.            |
| 2          | Spelling.             | Astronomy.            | 2            | Grammar.            | Astronomy.          |
| 3          | Definit'ns & Etym'gy. | Algebra.              | 3            | Astronomy.          | Modern History.     |
| 4          | Arithmetic.           | Book-keeping.         | 4            | Ancient History.    | Algebra.            |
| 5          | Geography.            | Geometry.             | 5            | Algebra.            | Geometry.           |
| 6          | Grammar.              | Natural Philosophy.   | 6            | Geometry.           | Natural Philosophy. |
| 7          | History U. S.         | Chemistry.            | 7            | Natural Philosophy. | Rhetoric.           |
| 8          | Astronomy.            | Science of Gov'tment. | 8            | Physiology.         | English Literature. |
| 9          | Constitution U. S.    |                       |              |                     |                     |
| 10         | Algebra.              |                       |              |                     |                     |
| 11         | Book-keeping.         |                       |              |                     |                     |

The slightest examination will convince any one that this Course is more moderate in its requirements than any that preceded it, and that, in defining the minimum of time which shall be spent in completing each grade, it guards effectually the pupils from the injurious effects of undue haste. I cannot conceive that anything more is practicable in this direction. New studies can only be introduced one at a time, and at intervals of at least one year; and no pupil is allowed to pass from the lower Course to the Supplementary Course at a younger age than thirteen. My own conviction has been that, if any error at all has been committed, it is in excessive restrictions upon the discretionary authority of the Principals; but in view of what has been stated to this Committee, whether it is wise to enlarge this authority at present, might admit of question.

Another and very important feature of this Course is, that it prescribes "oral instruction" for each grade, with the view to relieve the pupils, to some extent, of the burden of home study, and to make it the duty of the teacher to cultivate the intelligence of the pupils, by imparting general information, and in a manner different from the ordinary hum-drum of recitation from the text-books. The requirement is novel, and I am free to say, will impose some additional labor upon the teachers, and necessitate study out of school hours on their part. They will be obliged to investigate the subjects to be taught, and to premeditate carefully the best methods of presenting them; but, Sir, this will be a blessing rather than a bane to them; since it will prove a most wholesome and necessary spur to mental improvement, the need of which all of us occasionally feel. It is, however, natural that they should prefer to dispense with it; and if the Course had been arranged exclusively in their interest, this requisition would assuredly not have been inserted; but those who prepared this Course, looked to the interests of the pupils and the advancement of the general system of education in this city, as matters of paramount importance; and while they had no wish to invade vested rights, they probably felt that a wholesome reform having been resolved on, willing agents to carry it out would eventually be found.

Now, Sir, let us consider the various points of objection to this Course. The first is, "it is indefinite." It makes use of the

word "outlines" occasionally; and all the concentrated wisdom of our learned Principals and their intelligent assistants does not avail to unravel the intricacy, and clear up the mysterious obscurity that attach to that most remarkable word. Why, Sir, previous to this discussion I had no conception of the depth of significance which can be attributed to this term. I find, on looking over the Course, that it occurs only in connection with such subjects as geography and history—subjects of so vast an extent, that to prescribe an exhaustive study of them in all their details, and without the least qualification, would not only be oppressive, but absurd.

Yet, this had previously been done, and it was partly to correct this absurdity that the word "outlines" was used; but principally to relieve teachers of the responsibility, which previously they had suffered under, of teaching all the minutiae of these subjects.

The use of this word was suggested in many parts of the Course by your able and most estimable associate of last year, S. W. Roosevelt, Esq., then the Chairman of the Committee on Course of Studies, who, as we all know, was peculiarly the friend of the teachers, as well as of the schools, and anxiously desirous that the labors and anxieties of the former should be reduced to the lowest point consistent with their thorough efficiency. I can imagine the peculiar smile which his genial face would assume to hear this singular onslaught on so innocent and so *well-meaning* a word. And practically, this objection is utterly frivolous. In the intelligent and conscientious discharge of their duties, the teachers have as good a right to their idea of *outlines*, as the Superintendent who may examine their classes has to his; and if they *should* disagree in reference to some particular "feature of the sketch," it would be simply oppression on the part of the examiners to pronounce the teacher's labors inefficient on that account. Had this policy been pursued, Sir, do you think that the Superintendents could have sustained their reputation for fairness, or have retained the confidence of any considerable number of those whose labors they are required to inspect? I believe it to be eminently desirable that the Course of Study should in a proper sense be definite. The present Course is in no respect less so than any that preceded it;

for can it be considered less definite to prescribe "outlines of geography," than simply "geography," without any qualification? It is also quite as definite as that prescribed in any of the cities of the Union, except where *book* and *page* are prescribed, as in Boston and some other places. To the latter plan, there are very many objections; and it has always been considered by those who have inspected our system, a great excellence, that our course prescribed *subjects*, not *books*, leaving for the intelligence of the teacher a scope and freedom, of which, I am sorry to see, some of them wish to be deprived. The delegation from Boston that visited our city in April, 1866, and which consisted of gentlemen of the highest intelligence and culture, and of long experience in educational matters, thus speak of this feature of our system:—

"But the MOST IMPORTANT FEATURE in the New York schools is that the course of instruction is indicated by the *subjects of study*, and *not by text-books*. There is no uniformity of text-books. The Local Committee, the Trustees in each Ward, order the use of such as they may select from the list permitted by the Board of Education; and they are sometimes similar and sometimes different in different schools. But the Board of Education determine the *subjects* that shall be pursued by the different grades, and these are uniform in all the grades and in all the schools; and as the programme of instruction and study is thus indicated by subjects, the examination is by subjects, and not by text-books, and is conducted by experts—by the Superintendent and his assistants—that is by persons who are *masters of the subject*, and care nothing about particular text-books. In Boston, we indicate the studies by the text-books which we adopt and order to be used, and they are the same in all the schools of the same grade; and the quarterly examinations, made by members of a committee chosen from the different walks of life, daily engaged in their individual occupations, and seldom experts or masters in any particular study, are conducted by text-books, because commonly the Committee can only thus examine. One effect of this is that the master, the teacher, knowing that the examination of his or her pupils will be in and by the particular text-book ordered, is necessarily tempted to a very thorough *memoriter* drill in the text-book, and aims first to make the scholar master of what the text-book teaches, and in the form in which it is there taught; and thus much time is wasted in learning some things that are not important, or in learning others in a particular form and to express them in that form, and thus there is little opportunity for broad, gen-

eral instruction, that shall tend to lead the pupil to a clear comprehension and understanding of the whole subject taught, with power to express what he knows about it in his own way, in forms independent to any particular text-book. The New York teacher, on the other hand, knowing that his pupils are to be examined, not by or in any particular text-book which he uses, but in the general subject of that text-book, and that they will be expected to know all about it up to the point which the pupils of that grade should reach at the time of the examination, has no inducement to confine himself too closely to the text-book, or to make its particular forms the mode and limit of his instruction. On the contrary, the text-book becomes only a help, hardly a guide, and nothing of a restraint or boundary, but through that and a large amount of oral instruction and conversation, the teachers aim to give the pupils a broad, general comprehension of the subject, so that they may understand and be able to answer questions on that subject, in whatever form they are put. Indeed the New York system seems to offer the opportunity and to require a large amount of oral, conversational instruction, so much so, that it is somewhat difficult to perceive when the lessons are learned, save as they are learned at and through the recitation, and in conversation with the teacher.

\* \* \* The two features which have just been considered—the programme of instruction indicated by *subjects* and *not by text-books*, and the consequent examination by the Superintendent, in subjects and not in text-books, seem to be giving to the New York schools a remarkable degree of uniformity, and a steady progress in each school.”

But this very feature of excellence, here characterized as the most important, some of the teachers desire to have obliterated, and a mere routine of lists of places in geography and particular words for spelling substituted in its place. (See Statement of Thos. Hunter, page 26.) I must say I feel mortified that such a proposition should have emanated from so respectable a source.

Every Course of Study that does not prescribe particular books must be more or less indefinite, and, in my opinion, this indefiniteness is a merit, not a fault. I am opposed to making a “cast-iron rule” for the teachers—to laying down a narrow groove and compelling them forever to move backward and forward in that groove. This would indeed be “like a door on its hinges—constant motion, but no progress.” Not that it is undesirable to have an understanding with regard to certain points, between the teachers, who do the work, and the Superintendent—



ents, who are to examine it. The more extended observation and experience of the latter may be applied to very good purpose in making practical suggestions to the teachers as to topics and methods; and this is done every Saturday at the Normal School, to the extent permitted by the time; and I am glad to say there are but few teachers who have not availed themselves of this opportunity for counsel and instruction; the average attendance of that school, since September, having been nearly seven hundred. Very many, however, have kept away; and I am not surprised to find that some of those who have been loudest in their denunciations of the Course of Study are rarely or never seen in the school. In view of this fact, and of the importance of communicating such suggestions to all classes of teachers, the Board of Education provided, by resolution, that a Manual of Suggestions should be prepared, to accompany the Course; and such Manual has been in process of preparation since the adoption of the Course in December last.

The second objection is what has been styled "interminable reviews," but after having examined the Course of Study with regard to this point, I cannot but think there has been some very strange misconception as to its requirements in this respect. The only reviews enjoined are as follows: *Grade 7*—Punctuation, Roman Numbers, and Tables; *Grades 6 and 5*—Federal Money and Tables; *Grade 4*—Geography, occasionally; *Grade 3*—Mental Arithmetic; *Grade 2*—The Metric System; *Grade 1*—Geography. In the Supplementary Course, for females, Arithmetic, in *Grade 2*; for males, Geography, History, and Arithmetic, in *Grade 2*. Whatever other reviews are required, must be necessitated by imperfect instruction, or other causes; they are certainly not laid down in the Course of Study. § 88 of the Manual, however, prescribes "that every examination for promotion to a higher grade shall be preceded by a thorough review of all the studies pursued in the grade from which said promotion is to be made;" and § 90, that "on the last Friday of each month there shall be in every class of each course a review *in outline* of all the studies of the previous month, at which review all text books shall be laid aside by teachers and pupils."

Now, it appears to me that no intelligent and disinterested

person can doubt the propriety and importance of these two provisions, the careful observance of which must render subsequent reviews, except to a very limited extent, unnecessary. Where pupils, on the contrary, are promoted hastily and without this preparation and review, I can very well understand that thereafter "interminable reviews" would be indispensable. In my Report of 1857, I thus referred to this as, at the time, a prominent defect in the administration of the system: "Scholars often appear to have been promoted to supply vacant places in the next higher class rather than to pursue a more advanced course of study after thorough preparation in that which preceded it. *"Festina lente"* is the appropriate motto for the teacher in this respect. There is nothing that requires greater care and scrutiny than the classification and promotion of the scholars. If advanced too rapidly, they inevitably become discouraged, and have their future progress very much impeded, becoming indolent and careless from the unsatisfactory results of their exertions. Every step taken should be firmly secured before another is attempted. The pupil should not be permitted to pass to a higher grade in any branch of study, unless the more elementary ones have been fully mastered. Knowledge acquired under any other system must be ill digested and badly arranged in the mind, and must entirely fail in producing the desired impression upon the intellectual character. It is, moreover, unjust to the other members of a class to intermingle among them a number of raw recruits, as it were, and thus render it necessary for the teacher to have those rudiments rehearsed, again and again, by the whole, which perhaps to the majority are entirely familiar. Reviews are indispensably requisite; but there is nothing more discouraging to a pupil than to be constantly turned back in the study of a subject, when he begins to be sensible of his progress and to feel an interest in it. \* \* \* Every observing teacher will not fail to perceive that, however necessary periodical reviews may be, their frequency is to be avoided by making the progress of the pupil sure at every step, by allowing no lesson to be passed that is not thoroughly learned, and by substituting for them a constant drilling, questioning, and explaining, independent of the textbook, in connection with recitations from it." The fact is, that

judicious review is, perhaps, the most important agency employed by the teacher; since it is only by means of it that the acquisitions of the pupils are to be rendered solid and enduring. It must not be forgotten that the schools are elementary, not high schools, and that all that is taught constitutes only a foundation for future acquisitions. By no means can we justly consider any part as a "scaffolding" to be removed; since there is nothing taught, which it is not important that the pupil should remember, at any rate, in all its essential particulars. Hence, the monthly reviews required by § 90 are to be reviews "in outline"—of course omitting such minute particulars as the pupil could not be expected to remember permanently. It is proper also to advert to the fact, that whereas the rule formerly required *weekly reviews*, the present rule, adopted last December, requires only *monthly reviews*; why, therefore, the reviews should be so great a stumbling-block, I cannot precisely understand. Mr. Chairman, to do as some of the Principals and their subordinates ask you to do, would be to destroy the efficiency and thoroughness of our educational system. I should write upon it "Ichabod," for its fate would be sealed, and its glory really departed. When you prescribe that geography, history, &c., shall be taught in the schools, do you mean that pupils shall pass from them, knowing only the last section or chapter of the book they have studied, while they are utterly oblivious of the rest? Would it be a fitting apology for essential ignorance in any of these subjects, on the part of a pupil, that what he was required to know was in the first part of the book, which he had forgotten while learning the last? If you had employed a teacher to instruct your son or daughter in any branch of knowledge, would you be satisfied with such a statement; or would you not rather say, "Sir, I employed you to teach my son geography, not a fragment of it; and if, while teaching him that London is the capital of England, you have allowed him to forget that Washington is the capital of the United States, I shall look out for a more thorough and more sensible preceptor?"

But it seems the Superintendents are not to be allowed to examine any class in a grade preceding that in which they may happen to find it. This is the very modest proposition of certain of the Principals; and I have no doubt that, to some, it

would be a very great convenience ; particularly where the rule is, as to promotions, "They must go up, any how." The muzzling of the Superintendents under such circumstances would, I conceive, be quite as great an accommodation as, according to the old fable of Æsop, the killing or the muzzling of the dogs was to the wolves. The Superintendents are your own chosen officers ; and whether, in view of the revelations already made here, you can afford to tie their hands, lest they may make their investigations too searching, I think I may safely leave to your candid consideration.

But, Sir, the entire argument is based upon an utter perversion of the grades. They were designed for no such purpose ; but only to make certain divisions of the Course of Study, for convenience in designating the progress of classes. The Course prescribes an *order of studies* ; and it is absurd, in the last degree, to suppose that a pupil should advance in it any faster than is consistent with thorough and lasting acquirements. It is proper to say, however, that no reasonable examiner would expect the pupil to pass the same kind of examination in studies which he had discontinued for some time as it would be proper to exact in those which he had just completed.

A third objection, and one that demands a very serious consideration, is that the requirements for simultaneous study are excessive, and overburden both teacher and pupils. This seems to lie exclusively against the first grade of the ordinary Course, and the Supplementary Course. I have already shown that the present Course of Study is the fifth adopted by the Board since 1853, and that every one has been made lighter in its requirements than that which preceded it. If, therefore, further modifications shall be found necessary in the same direction, I shall be found among the advocates of them. I feel myself as much interested in consummating a reform of this kind as any that have spoken here on the subject. Let, however, the necessity be clearly shown ; and let the present Course be tried sufficiently long to test its excellencies and defects. With regard to the First Grade, I present the following reasons for believing that the arguments offered against it are fallacious or disingenuous :

1. The effort has been made to magnify its requirements by representing that it comprises *thirteen distinct studies* ; whereas,

it, in fact, contains only *nine*, including reading, spelling, and definitions, which have, up to this point, been studied three years. Indeed, as I have shown, it prescribes only one new branch of study, namely, astronomy ; for physical geography, in its essential features, must have been taught, more or less, all through the course. There are, indeed, exercises in penmanship, drawing, and composition, and oral lessons to be given ; but it is certainly disingenuous to count all these requirements as of equal rank, and to divide the aggregate of time by the sum total, so as to exhibit the amount of time that can be allotted to each. Some subjects need, perhaps, a lesson each day ; while for others, one per week would be sufficient. The argument, Sir, is bad ; although the *case* might seem to be made out.

2. Most teachers of this grade attempt, voluntarily, to do more than is prescribed, and generally wish to do it in less time than the Course now assigns. When the time was unlimited, the Vice-Principals or Assistants of Male Grammar Schools generally undertook to teach all the requirements of this grade, and the second Supplementary Grade, in less than one year ; but now, when they are compelled to take two years, they complain. At the same time, you will not fail to have noticed, that while complaining of the present number of studies as excessive, they ask for *two* additional ones, algebra and book-keeping, in order that they may prepare a few stragglers for admission into the College ; but, at the same time, with remarkable consistency, ask that the introductory class of the College be abolished. Sir, the teaching of algebra in this grade had, previous to its discontinuance, become a very great abuse. Little boys of eleven or twelve years of age were often found in the higher classes, who had been driven over the subject as far as quadratic equations, when they could scarcely write their own names, and certainly could not spell the simplest words with tolerable accuracy. But it is said, the smaller schools will suffer from not being able to prepare boys for the College. I do not think that this is so. I find, from the records of the College, that from 1849 to 1864, inclusive, the whole number of admissions to the College was 4,530 ; and of this number, 2,151, or  $47\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. were admitted from four schools—while twenty-one schools only sent 334, or about 7



per cent. of the whole. Whether so small a result as this would warrant the sacrifice of any desirable restriction, may well be questioned. The existence of this restriction may, however, account for some of the opposition which has been made to this part of the Course.

The objections to the *Supplementary Course* I believe to be sincere, and to have resulted from a misapprehension, arising, naturally, out of a change which it has been found necessary to make with regard to the examination of these classes. The multitude of duties devolving upon us has obliged us, this year, to discontinue the examination of the classes of the second grade for promotion, and to leave this work to the Principals of the schools, who are authorized by the rules of the Board to make these promotions; hence, it has been supposed by some that the pupils would not be permitted to graduate without passing a minute examination in every part of the whole Course, as now prescribed. This, of course, we never dreamt of asking, or of deviating essentially from the usual requirements, which have only embraced *eight studies*, as my Report of last year (page 30) will clearly show. This misapprehension I greatly regret, as it has been the means of placing us on the record, in connection with the Course of Study, as requiring sixteen branches for graduation, two of which are not mentioned in the Course at all.

There is no doubt that the Supplementary Course is, at present, greatly burdensome to many of the schools, and that some provision should be made to abolish it, and transfer the pupils to a central institution, where they could be taught at less expense, and with greater efficiency. In this connection, I beg leave to cite a brief passage from my Report of last year :

“Another year’s observation of this part of the system has deepened the impression previously formed, that the advanced course of instruction, while of great benefit to the immediate recipients of it, operates, in many respects, injuriously to the general interests of the schools. In many cases, the greatest share of attention of the Principal and Vice-Principal is given to the maintenance and instruction of the supplementary class, which often contains barely enough pupils to admit of its legal continuance; and thus the other classes do not receive the supervision to which they are entitled, and which they need, and

are, moreover, crowded to overflowing, because promotions cannot be made previous to the graduation. The unwillingness of Principals to part with their advanced pupils, and often the reluctance of the latter to leave schools with which they have been long connected, appear to render all means of removing this evil ineffectual, except the establishment of a central institution of a higher grade, into which these advanced pupils may be promoted. As so large a number of them continue their studies with the view to become teachers, the establishment of a Normal School would greatly relieve the schools in this respect, and free many earnest teachers, both Principals and Assistants, from much anxiety and toil."

And now, Sir, having noticed all the general objections to the Course of Study, I need say but very little with regard to those which have reference to particular subjects, such as Grammar, History, &c. I believe these are now arranged in the Course in the best possible manner; and in that opinion I am confirmed by the uniform practice throughout the country. Of course very much depends upon the manner in which they are taught. If grammar is made so little subservient to any true object of practical usefulness, as to *unfit* the pupils to speak correct English, it is simply disgraceful to the instructor, not to the subject; and if, in any class or school, pupils can recite the rules of syntax, and yet will constantly use such language as "I ain't got no slate," it no more reflects upon the utility of the rules of syntax, than it would upon the usefulness of arithmetical rules, to find a pupil glibly repeating them, who could not do a sum in addition. To say that a pupil can pass through one of our schools—and that one considered by some to be the best in the city, and while going through the different grades lose the correct habits of speech, with which he entered the school, so as to leave it rather corrupted than benefited by the instruction received, must be a gross exaggeration—and, indeed, is such an insult to our system, that it ought not to be permitted to pass without rebuke. And, moreover, if in any school the students of *history* are kept "memorizing mere words and figures—rattling only the dry bones" of the subject, it is time the Principal of that school reformed the practice, and introduced better methods of teaching. And this leads me to say, that defective methods, resulting from a deficient training of the teachers, are the fruitful source of most of the difficulties of which we have

to complain. It is this that aggravates the troubles of the teachers, by causing them to teach very much which a better informed judgment would convince them was unnecessary. The text-books are too often loaded down with useless details, which, from this want of correct judgment, are treated as of equal value with those great essential outlines that all should have thoroughly fixed in their minds.

I now pass to the third source of complaint, which is, that the Superintendents' examinations and numerical record of results are productive of annoyance and unnecessary anxiety. I do not know but that this ought to be considered a compliment to the Superintendents. One of the speakers has said there was a time when "the examinations were farces"—and the result of this he very graphically depicts by saying, "the teachers read novels and wrote poetry (such as it was), took it easy, and had a '*good time*' generally, gave their boys long examples in long division, while they pored over '*Watson's Practice of Medicine*,' or '*Blackstone's Commentaries*.'" That this is not the case now is generally acknowledged—and probably the wholesome fear of examinations may have some logical connection with the fact. I was not aware myself that things had ever been quite as bad as he has represented them, but, of course, he speaks of what he knows.

A very intelligent and close observer of our system (Mr. Fraser, of England) thus speaks, in his report to Parliament, of the examinations, as a feature of our system :

"In New York city, the inspection and examination of the schools is very thorough. Each class, and each individual scholar in the class, was examined orally, marked and graded. I was present at some of these examinations. *They evidently were regarded as serious matters*, both by teachers and scholars ; and I have no doubt they help to keep all parties concerned in them up to their work."

This is the testimony of a disinterested person, and having offered it, I shall pass from this part of the discussion, feeling that if my twelve years' work in examining the schools does not speak sufficiently for itself in the improvement manifestly effected in the system by means of it, it is of little use for me to attempt its vindication.

Nor, Sir, do I feel at all disposed to speak in vindication of the "marking system," so called. A hard battle was fought over it some years ago, and I had thought a decision of the matter at issue had been reached. I regret to find that some who were the most vigorous champions of this system then, are now disposed to array themselves on the other side. Let me only suggest that a system which, to use the words of him who now assails it, "elevated the schools, drove out incompetent and lazy teachers, and infused a new energy into all the departments," may not, even now, be altogether useless and unnecessary. I do not know that "at present the surgeon's knife is unnecessary." "Ulcers" sometimes break out afresh; and, most assuredly, if grammar, history, composition, &c., are taught in some schools, as they are said to be, it behooves the Superintendents to sharpen up their most effective instruments, preparatory to a very severe operation.

With reference to the privacy or publicity of the marks employed to designate the results of the examinations, I would simply say, that these marks are the "official record," designed not at all for the teacher's information; since whatever faults are developed in the examination are usually pointed out in another way. They have, however, been given to teachers, because they solicited this; and certainly with no intention to harass or annoy them. It is indeed a convenience to us to withhold the marks from them. If the Trustees, who have a right to a comparative record of the examinations, make an improper use of this information, we cannot, and need not, be responsible for this. The teachers have their remedy by appeal to the Board, who have most assuredly shown a fearless determination to protect the humblest teacher in the full enjoyment of every just right. Sir, we may well be proud of this feature of our system, namely, that not one atom of injustice can be done to Principals or Assistants, which may not be fully repaired, through agencies in control of the Board of Education. Let not then the meritorious be afraid of scrutiny into their conduct, or the record which is based upon this scrutiny. If this record is unjust, expose the particular injustice; but assail not a system by means of which so much good has incontestably been accomplished.

And here, gentlemen, I close. I must apologize to you for trespassing so long upon your patience ; but the interest I feel in every point concerned in this discussion is so great, that I could not be satisfied with a briefer exposition of what I have deemed important facts and important considerations ; and even now I am apprehensive, that from haste in putting these thoughts together, I may have omitted some points essential to a true and faithful presentment. But if so, I am confident that my colleague who is to succeed me in this discussion will fully supply the deficiency.

The Committee then adjourned until Monday, the eighth day of June, 1868, at 4½ o'clock, P. M.



## FOURTH SESSION.

The Committee met pursuant to adjournment, on Monday, June 8th, 1868, at half-past four o'clock in the afternoon. Present, Commissioners Merrill, (*Chairman*,) Dupignac, West, Hall, Warren, Neilson, and Euring.

The Chairman announced that Assistant Superintendent THOMAS F. HARRISON would continue the discussion on behalf of the Superintendents.

Superintendent HARRISON then addressed the Committee as follows :

MR. CHAIRMAN, AND GENTLEMEN OF THE COMMITTEE—

My senior associates having already presented so full and able and convincing a view of the whole subject under discussion, any remarks I may have to offer must necessarily be somewhat miscellaneous and fragmentary in character. All must be conscious that the great interest of this drama is already over, and there remains for me and for those who may follow me, only the more humble duty of furnishing such suggestions as in the printed Report will be simply an appendix.

The opinions I shall present are based upon a somewhat peculiar experience, and I trust that, under the circumstances, a passing allusion to myself will not be felt an offense against propriety. For 29 years, with only a brief period of other occupation, I have been connected with the schools now in charge of this Board, as Class Teacher, Principal, Normal School Instructor, and for the last two years an Assistant Superintendent. You will perceive, therefore, that I must necessarily have become familiar with all the subjects of these discussions, with the advantage of a practical view from the opposite positions.

The history and nature of the Course of Study has been already so clearly set forth that I shall say but little in reference to it. As to the subjects required in its several sections, little or no objection has been raised against the grades below the First of the Grammar Schools. Just at this point important changes have been urged, the nature of which I desire to consider. It has been proposed by various parties to strike out Astronomy, to strike out Physical Geography, or to change it

from a regular study into a course of lectures, and to insert in their place Bookkeeping and Algebra. In regard to the Bookkeeping, I think it might in several schools, be profitably substituted for or alternated with the ordinary writing exercise of the First Grade. The demands of business render this the more important, in view of the fact that so few of our pupils get beyond this grade.

But no such recommendation can be urged in favor of the study of Algebra.

Of all the subjects pursued in the higher classes of our schools none other seems to me so barren of results commensurate with the time it costs. While in its higher forms—forms which in our schools we can never expect to reach—it is the analytic process, the master key, by means of which the sublimest secrets of nature are unlocked, to the schoolboy or the school girl it is in the main an objectless pursuit, its highest apparent purpose the solution of certain unpractical problems, or of interminable formulæ, solved by devices which soon become essentially mechanical. If a mathematical discipline is required of a different order from that indispensable one furnished by Arithmetic, the wide field of the simpler Geometry, and especially its problems, based upon the objective system and taught graphically, will much better meet the demand, and at the same time furnish knowledge of the highest practical value. But both the Geometry and the Algebra would be out of place in the First Grade, though the former is in every way the less objectionable. And what is it proposed to throw out to make room for the Algebra? Astronomy!—The simplest elements of Astronomy—the simplest facts in relation to the structure and glories of those heavens which day and night bend over every human soul, and awaken in the childhood and maturity, both of the individual and the race, the sublimest thoughts that are given to man. I am mortified to think that my fellow teachers of this city should have put it upon record, that they would choose that our pupils should leave us ignorant of the simple explanations of the ordinary phenomena of the heavens, not knowing, perhaps, whether the sun rises in the east or in the south; why the winter days are short and cold, and the summer days long and hot; what the moon really is, and why she so constantly changes her form and fre-

quently disappears; what an eclipse is, what the tides are, what the stars, the comets, the brilliant planets, and the passing meteors. I am mortified that our pupils should be ignorant of all these things, though so intensely interesting and important, and so easily taught and explained as simple facts, and would prefer to substitute a facility in solving  $\sqrt{x + \sqrt{a}} + \sqrt{x - \sqrt{a}} = \sqrt{ab}$ , or in determining by algebraic formulæ how long, under certain highly improbable conditions, it would take A or B to drink a cask of beer. Algebra may, perhaps, sometimes be profitably taught in these classes, if it be rigidly confined to, and combined with, an explanation of the problems of the ordinary Arithmetic, such as those of Interest and Percentage; but even in such case it would be dearly purchased at such a price as the loss of all intelligent knowledge of the grand and beautiful phenomena of the heavens.

It has too long been our reproach that the sciences of nature have not received from us their due share of attention; but, by retaining the ordinary phenomena of astronomy, and systematically pressing in the lower grades the "oral instruction" in simple facts relative to animals, plants, and minerals, an important reform will in due time be wrought in our system.

And why is this retrograde step advised? Partly, it would seem, in order that a few pupils may more readily enter the College. You have here the point of origin of this whole agitation. It is true, that other matters of far greater moment are those which, to the evident surprise and disappointment of some, now stand prominent in this discussion. But this one underlies them all, so far as relates to those Male Departments that have been chiefly represented.

Before the present Course of Study was adopted pupils entered the College from the old *First Grade*, which was, in my opinion, much overloaded. By the new Course, the studies of the class preparing for the College are transferred to the lower Supplementary, and a full school year—not too much—required in the studies assigned to the new First Grade before transfer to the Supplementary. This, in effect, really lowered the requirements of the First Grade to nearly those of the old Second. At the same time the new Course, in order to do away, as far as possible, with the overworking of pupils and

teachers in consequence of immature promotions, applied the same regulation as to entering the lower Supplementary that was, and still is required in the Female Departments, viz.: the Superintendent's certificate of qualification, as determined by a careful individual examination. The situation—to use the term with which we have become so familiar—is obvious. Heretofore the Principal might put such pupils as he saw fit into the College class, whatever their real grade. They were vigorously run through the preparing mill, for a few weeks or months, and soon passed to the College for examination. But with the head of the column thus cut off, and every possible case sent up, it became at once necessary to transfer, almost bodily, nearly all the remaining school, the reorganization extending, of course, to the lowest classes. Under the new regulation, so long as it stands, this is no longer possible, since no one can be promoted to the College class without having been at least a school-year in the First Grade, and examined by the Superintendent. No more wise regulation was ever enacted by the Board of Education. After a very brief period the number sent to the College will be at least as great as ever, and with a far better preparation. No citizen's son is in any way debarred from the privileges which belong to him, and a step has been taken which must do much to raise the character of the Introductory Class. As to the alleged injurious effect upon individual schools, the statistics, already presented by my colleague, sufficiently show how small it must necessarily be.

But the request that has been made as to the change of studies in the First Grade would at once practically convert it into the requirements for entering the College, and the regulation of the Board to prevent immature promotions and the overtaxing of the teachers and pupils, would be rendered nugatory.

There is one other point in this connection in regard to which some of the Principals are naturally sensitive. The Board has quite recently so arranged the salaries as to make the compensation of the Principals dependent upon the average attendance of the Department. They are not, therefore, to be blamed if they view with apprehension any regulation which, by rendering possible the transfer of a half dozen or a dozen pupils to some other school, may change an annual average from 503 to 499,

or from 302 to 296, and by so doing, whatever the benefit to the system and the pupil, inflict upon the Principal a loss of \$250 a year.

In common with my experienced associate, I must enter my protest against the sweeping assertions that have been made as to Grammar and Composition. A great change for the better was effected some years ago, when the analysis of sentences was made to take the precedence of mere verbal parsing, with its ever-repeated "rules." It took years to overcome the traditional conservatism of our teachers on this subject, yet a great gain was finally made. Though but a step in the progress, it was the most that could be done at the time. Subsequently many teachers overdid the analysis, just as they had previously over-elaborated the parsing. The efforts of your Examiners have more recently been to reduce to a minimum, or encourage the abandonment of verbal parsing; to simplify the sentential analysis, and more especially, as the new Course of Study clearly shows, to forbid all formal definitions till the Third Grade; to treat the subject conversationally and without books; to cultivate the power of construction, by beginning with the simplest possible forms, and by the gradual addition of simple adjuncts leading to those somewhat more complex; by subordinating analysis to construction, and, by particularly enjoining "exercises to correct common errors in speech." If all these improvements are neglected by the class teachers, the blame does not rest upon the Course of Study. In connection with the Reading Lessons, formal definitions of words to be committed to memory are forbidden, and pupils required instead to use the words in sentences of their own construction, so as to show that the meanings are understood. If the pupils' practical grammar is not properly cultivated, it surely cannot be charged to the Course as it now stands. In regard to the Continuous Construction or Composition, it has been asserted that "little children" *are* given such subjects as "Truth, Integrity, Honor, Piety, Virtue, and the like, upon which they are to write their ideas;" and this is evidently charged upon the Course of Study. I should be glad to be shown where and how the Course enjoins such folly. If it occurs at all, it can only be through the direction, permission, or neglect of the Principal of the school—and



from my long and intimate association with the gentlemen in charge of the Male Departments, I am very confident they would not, any of them, even the gentleman who could so deliberately utter such an assertion, permit so gross a violation of common sense. I regret the statement the more that it should come from the Principal of a school of which the energy, spirit, numbers, popularity, and efficiency are as much a source of just pride to us all as in the case of any single school in the city, and the excellence of whose classes in grammar has been a subject of especial remark. Though not a delegate of the Principals, I cannot refrain from protesting, if not in their name then in that of the system with which we have together been so long identified, against so groundless an accusation. Pharaoh's orders were given through his taskmasters. Who is the Pharaoh in this case? I am inclined to believe that, like some others in this discussion, he is simply a "man of straw."

Remarks have been made in regard to the details of the class examinations, some of which require a brief reference. They were doubtless made in perfect sincerity, yet, it seems to me, without due consideration. One of the delegates of the assistants was instructed to complain of the practice of judging of the condition of a class and of the teacher's ability, after an examination compressed into two or three hours, yet reviewing work that may have cost twice or thrice as many months of intense labor. Yet a very little reflection would have shown how very inconsiderate is such an objection. How many minutes will it take to judge of the character of the writing in a class, although it may have been a whole year in preparation? How long to judge of success in teaching spelling, when ten or twelve words are selected chiefly from the reading lessons, and are written by every pupil on a slate, together with a short sentence, consisting mostly of important monosyllables? Must every pupil in a large class read a long paragraph in order to determine whether the teacher has systematically and successfully trained that class in proper habits of enunciation, in correctness, and in naturalness of expression? In most cases, when a part only of the class has been examined, the teachers have themselves been requested to select from six to ten of their best readers, to whom as many more have been added from the rest of the class by the exami-

ner. A few judiciously selected examples in arithmetic will clearly determine the character and condition of the teaching in that important branch, and the same remark may be made in relation to every other study. Indeed, it is not too much to say that, with the exception of some of the higher classes, where the studies are more numerous, any experienced Principal, familiar with the routine of our schools, can make a reasonably just estimate of the success of a class teacher in a single hour, if the plan of the examination be first thoroughly thought out. To assert the contrary, is like requiring one to eat every article and all of it on a bill of fare, in order to determine if the hotel has a competent cook.

Another equally earnest delegate pathetically says: "Think of a thorough-going class, after a year's strenuous exertions, and with the confidence they have a right to feel on their own ground, tripped up at the outset of the examination by a few hap-hazard questions!" And decidedly adds: "This is reason enough, without another besides, for making such a change in the Course of Studies as would prevent such a thing from ever again taking place," which is soon followed by another distressing allusion to Pharaoh and the straw, the pertinency of the whole being shown by a final assertion that "it is not necessary to know that such a condemnation of a teacher ever did occur." I confess that I do not like to hear my carefully considered questions called "hap-hazard" ones, but I suppose that the expression itself is of the "hap-hazard" order. The fact is, the chief danger of failure of a sensitive or timid class, is from the want of self-control occasionally exhibited by the teacher in such cases. If a question is answered correctly, the teacher smiles and nods approvingly; if a blunder is made, even in a question immaterial in itself, yet leading to some more important inquiry, the teacher frowns or looks fearfully distressed, and in some cases that I have seen, casts a look upon the poor child, perhaps a dear little girl, so compounded of utter despair, reproach, and accusation of misplaced confidence, that I have had quietly to suspend the examination, and talk pleasant nonsense to the class to get them into a more rational condition. Even when not so bad as this, it is frequently impossible to get the eyes of the pupils turned more than a moment from the teacher's face, anxiously reading there not the

Superintendent's but the teacher's judgment of the individual's success, and insuring a lower estimate of the "*training*," from the evident want of all culture of self-reliance.

It has, doubtless, been remarked by the Committee that every grade of Grammar School teachers, from the Principals down, have, with greater or less definiteness, protested against what is known as the "marking system." Reserving, for the present, all remarks upon the merits or demerits of that system, I would call the attention of the Committee to the naturalness of those complaints in the light of the revelations that have been made by the teachers themselves. It has been most pointedly charged by the assistants of every grade that promotions are frequently made into and from their classes, of pupils who are far below the legal requirements for entering upon the grade they are transferred to, and that this is the chief source of the harassing anxiety under which they labor. I do not examine further into these statements. I hope to find opportunity a little further on. But granting that this is substantially as stated, what must be the view which these class teachers take of any system which undertakes to and does definitely state the judgment of an experienced examiner and practical teacher as to the actual condition of such classes, whatever their antecedents, at the time of the examination? If these pupils had been fully prepared at the time of transfer, had they been what is called "up to grade" in all their studies, and more especially in their arithmetic, an energetic, experienced, and competent teacher, with sufficient time before her, would feel no special anxiety beyond that which is inseparable from the nature of the arduous task, if her work is to be examined at all. But she finds, when beginning to re-organize her class for the examination campaign, that she has, first, a dissatisfied and unsatisfactory remnant of the old class not promoted,—in the main, very undesirable and unpromising stock,—and the new recruits buoyant with their triumphant advance, but only half or two-thirds through their previous grade. She has usually two such classes during the year, but the best prepared pupils are those transferred after an examination; and the class which she must now prepare has had no such stimulus, the teacher below being, for one-half of the classes she teaches each year, entirely free from all unwholesome

fear of the Superintendent's "dreaded marks," the result of that freedom being a large and interesting element in the new work preparation. What is to be done? The logical sequence of arithmetical processes cannot in any manner be engineered aside. A single and perfectly proper and legitimate question, from the Superintendent, not a "hap-hazard," but a test question, one of a kind which the teacher's experience forewarns to be as certain as fate—such a question may, if not properly prepared for, produce most disastrous results. So the teacher must bring the class up to the unfinished grade in arithmetic as rapidly as she can, and then go on with her own proper one. But skill in arithmetic and arithmetical analysis, like confidence, is a plant of slow growth, especially in classes prematurely promoted. Meanwhile, the class enters immediately after the transfer, upon the Geography, History, &c., of the new grade, because in these there is no such logical sequence, and if the request to be excused from all "review" of these studies be granted, a delightful, satisfactory, and sacred veil will be drawn over all omissions and deficiencies, and all parties—but the pupils—will undoubtedly be benefited.

Now no subordinate teacher likes to offend her Principal. She is, or ought to be, entirely obedient to the directions the Principal gives her, and, with a heavy heart, turns to the work laid out for her. Is it any wonder, then, *she* dreads the "marks?" for hitherto there has been no such systematic inquiry into the character of the previous promotions from grade to grade, as is instituted in regard to the special work for which the class teacher is held responsible. And since the real responsibility for the evil plight of the class teachers rests in so great a degree upon the Principals, it is certainly much to the credit of these ladies and gentlemen, that they have united in earnestly recommending that their subordinates be not "marked" any longer—which result, when combined with that of the teachers in regard to reviews, and which, partly for like reasons, the Principals also endorse, will, if granted, together bring about a sort of teachers' millennium, while the results upon the scholarship and efficiency of our schools, of thus having *all* checks swept away, and the reports of examination reduced to vague and general instead of, as at present, specific

and definite statements, need no very remarkable prophetic power to characterize them.

Now, what is this "*Marking System*," which, in the present state of things, stands so much in the way of the comfort and mental quietude of my fellow teachers? For reasons which will presently be obvious, and which are already well-known to many within the sound of my voice, I could personally have wished to be spared the moral necessity of discussing this subject at all. Yet my official position, the request of the Committee, the importance of the subject itself, and above all, a sense of justice, alike forbid that I should be silent in regard to a matter which by universal consent occupies so prominent a part in these inquiries. In every important attack which has been made upon this floor it has furnished the occasion for the last and most energetic charge. Yet at the close of the most elaborate of these attacks, one gentleman has, with true frankness said, "Nor am I insensible to the advantages that have flowed from the steady pressure on the great body of teachers in the schools through that system."

Another just as clearly testifies: "The rigid mathematical system that succeeded when a whole department was examined and uniformly marked by the same Superintendent, I have always defended individually as the most exact and thorough we have ever had. That it elevated the schools, that it drove out incompetent and lazy teachers, and that it infused a new energy into all the departments, I have never entertained a doubt. It was the knife of the surgeon; the ulcer was cut out; the patient recovered. This was a good work and well done." And a third gentleman, in an equally kind spirit, says of its practical administration: "I can but express the same respect for men who have had it as a part of their daily duty to employ an instrument capable of so much harm, and who have for years so used it as to have lost no jot of the reputation for fairness which they obtained when they entered upon their office, and to retain to this day the confidence of those who would have been most affected by a wrong judgment."

All this is the testimony of gentlemen of long experience in the working of the marking system, hampered and perverted though it has been, as they seem not to have noticed, by imma-



ture promotions, for which that system is in no way responsible.

This method of denoting the results of an examination has a history, and a brief consideration of it is, in my judgment, important, because, of the 44 gentlemen who were members of the Board when it was so fully discussed in 1859, only *one*, the President of that year, is still a member. I am glad to see him on the present Committee.

I was at that time fully identified with the most active opposition to the marking system.

On the 21st of Sept., 1859, a Memorial was presented to the Board of Education, signed by 25 of the Male Principals, myself among them, protesting against the marking system, and stating the reasons for their protest. You will allow me to present a brief extract from that Memorial:

Commencing with its main proposition, "That the system of examination pursued by the Superintendent is productive of the most serious injustice to the teachers, and of the greatest injury to the pupils of the schools"—the Memorial continues that "The undersigned base their conclusions on the following specific reasons: First, the Superintendent's system takes no account of the circumstances that surround each school, but measures all by the same unbending standard. Second, the teachers in unfavorable localities are often compelled to work harder than those in the more favorably situated schools, and yet find themselves degraded in professional reputation by this system. Third, it interferes with the internal management of the schools to such an extent as to make the interest of the teachers, in many cases, entirely antagonistic to the true progress of the pupils."

This third point had reference to the detention of promotions from Primary Departments, an evil long since remedied. "Fourth, it permits the Superintendent to mark any class after a few minutes examination, as his opinion at the time may lead him, and from this mark there is no appeal. It thus throws into the hands of one man a power entirely despotic, the exercise of which is a grevous injury to the best interests of the schools. Fifth, it is in its very nature an unjust system, because it cannot take cognizance of the difficulties under which many

schools labor, and cannot, except in the most mechanical way, test the work of any true teacher."

Doc. No. 8, of the Vol. of 1859, which I here take the liberty of laying before you, you have a clear illustration of what the marking system was—*Was*, I say, not *is*. It is a document of 82 pages, 72 of which consist of closely printed figures. Copies of this paper were sent to every school and ward board, and to every member of the Board itself—these last being at the same time *ex-officio* members of the local boards, and exclusively identified with their local interests.

This document, among the multiplicity of facts which it assumed to set forth, gave not only, *as now*, the special results of each class in every study, the average results in each class, and its average grade, but also in columns immediately adjacent, the average of every class at the last examination, and the average grade at that time, and more particularly, as you will find on page 81, the *actual number* in each grade in every school, the *average grade* of that school, and in the next column the average grade at the last examination.

The whole table, but especially the last page, was a tremendous power. The Commissioners, who took a proper interest and pride in their own local schools, the local boards, and the teachers themselves, were mortified if their schools were not among the leaders in the list in regard to average grade.

The document was read by the School Officers and Commissioners, and sometimes by desperate teachers to the assembled departments, and every possible appeal was made to pupils and teachers to try to stand well on the list which would meet so many eyes, and have its last table copied into the newspapers.

In too many cases it mattered not if the situation of the school, and the early age at which its pupils must leave, pleaded for lenity in judgment and moderation in demand as to grade; the pressure was tremendous, and in many cases *intolerable*. The Course of Study was, as my senior associate has shown, far more onerous and indefinite than that now assailed—while at the same time the power of the local boards over teachers of every grade was unrestrained, and operated as a powerful and fearful incentive to desperate efforts. Even where no practically unjust step was taken by the local boards, the anticipation of the

final possible effects of such a document, and a succession of such documents, was a constant source of anxiety to every teacher, but to none so much as to the Principals. Local boards were constantly changing their members, and the considerate judgment of this year might be followed by a demand for the highest average standing in the year following.

Then indeed it was true in regard to our pupils in most of the schools, "that they must go up anyhow." By desperate efforts they *did* go up, and by efforts equally strenuous they were kept up.

Is it any wonder that 25 of the Male Principals united in an earnest protest against a system so onerous? Some few of the Principals, indeed, strenuously defended it, though it is but justice to say, that one of these, at least, seems so far to have changed his views as to become a leading opponent of the system, when for nine long years it has lost its chief evil features, and no longer publicly glorifies those schools which have best the advantages, by proclaiming them to all who read the papers as having the highest average grade.

The Board, through its Committee, patiently listened to our complaints, and after hearing from all parties—the teachers who had and the teachers who had *not* signed the protest, "directed that a meeting of all the Male Principals should be called, and a committee appointed to confer with the Superintendent and his assistants with a view to a final arrangement of all the matters in controversy. This committee, after due deliberation and consultation, presented the following document, to which was appended the signatures of nearly all the Male Principals:

"We, the undersigned Principals of Grammar Schools of our city, do hereby state that *we are in favor of a continuance of the system of examinations conducted in the same able and impartial manner as heretofore*; taking exceptions, however, to that part of the system by which teachers and schools are brought into unjust comparisons with each other.

"We therefore recommend a discontinuance of any measures by which said comparisons may be made, and that the account of the examinations be entered only upon the records of the schools respectively.

"Inasmuch as the usual mode of expressing the condition of each class or school by numerals furnishes the means of drawing

said comparisons, we would also earnestly recommend that, in making the various statements upon the records of the schools, the use of numerals be discontinued."

My name was one of the small number not signed to the compromise. Although all the chief objectionable features were removed, even to the disuse of numerals in the school Record Books, there still remained the well understood certainty accepted by those that did sign, that adjectives of quality would be used in their place. It was easy to see that if 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 were to be replaced by "*deficient, poor, fair, good and excellent,*" the numbers could be very readily reconstructed. And since the Superintendents expressly reserved the right, which was acceded to by the teachers, "to use such a standard, numerical or otherwise, as might in their judgment, enable them to approximate with the greatest attainable accuracy to the real character, standing and attainments of classes under examination," while indicating the results in words only instead of numerals, it was just as plain that the third condition amounted to nothing; and though satisfied that the system was shorn of its inherent power for mischief, I was unable to sign this document, which was the final basis of settlement.

Nine years have passed. Within a recent period wise changes in the organic law have altered the relations of the Commissioners themselves to the general system and to special wards. The Board has shown its generous sympathy with the teachers, by largely increasing their compensation, and by holding over them, when necessary, the shield which the renovated law has given it. Principals and Vice-Principals can no longer be appointed by the local boards, nor removed by them. Subordinate teachers unjustly or even irregularly deprived of position have sought and found the protection of the Board in time of their need. This is a grand gain to the cause of education, by assuring the faithful teacher that redress will follow injury. Reforms within their own individual departments, which were once impossible to the Principals, need now but moral courage to ensure them. The necessity which was once upon so many of them that their pupils should "go up any how," exists no longer. The real evils which have been charged upon the marking system as it now is, both teachers and Superintendents have clearly shown to arise from

other causes, the chief of which is immature promotions from grade to grade. Though this cause of trouble existed "long ago, when the examinations were merely farces," the old form of the marking system had the effect of intensifying and systematizing its action, and brought many schools into a false position, from which even now they have not wholly extricated themselves. If a single class was once forced, by any process, to prepare for graduation, with all its public display, and its gratification of parents and officers, it would never do for the school to fall below a result once attained, no matter under what circumstances. The whole line of classes must "go up," and the next year, and the next, *must* send forth classes fully equal to those which preceded; and so long as this continues, the Principal of the neighboring school feels that she must do the same thing, lest the school should suffer in the estimation of those of its patrons who, though not competent judges, will send their children where graduation will be least delayed.

It is not too much to say, that if the Principals had generally agreed to let one whole year pass by in which no school should have a Graduating Class, a relief would be even now felt, which, by "slowing" the whole line, would have attained a more solid scholarship, while all reasonable dread of the marks would have been removed.

From a pretty intimate knowledge of the condition of nearly every Grammar Department, I feel justified in saying that the female Principals and Vice Principals at least, with scarcely an exception, would have hailed such an agreement as equivalent to an emancipation; yet, like the European Powers with their peace military establishments, each has waited for the other "to disarm," and it would seem will continue to do so until some such arrangement is made.

Allow me a few words as to my recent experience and present views of the marking system.

Two years ago I entered upon my present duties, and was, of course, obliged to adopt the plan of estimating and recording results which my official superior directed. I honestly set out to conform strictly to these directions, as a subordinate should, though my opinion was unchanged, even as to that remnant of the system, which, by the teachers' agreement of 1859,



was still in use; for the mere question whether I should use a numeral or an adjective whose approximate numerical value was known, I considered, and do now consider, of no real moment whatever. Using all the lenity which was compatible with my obligations and with the good of the schools; sharing with my associate in the examination of the classes of every grade, from the lowest to the Supplementary, I intently studied the condition of the schools, and the character of the agencies which were acting upon them—the marking system, of course, included. Experience soon taught me that some systematic and uniform plan of noting results was indispensable; and I turned again to the question as to the possibility of working out, in my own mind, a feasible substitute for the present plan, which, after a full year's experience in the system as it was, I might lay before Mr. Randall, and show wherein it was better than that which it might displace. I was astonished at the result of my investigations. Although so long connected with the system, and conscious in a general way, as well as in many particulars, that a great advance had been made since the consolidation of 1853, I was not prepared for the magnitude of the change, nor for the order and efficiency which had been impressed upon all parts of the system. Schools which I had known to be in a chronic state of deficiency, I now found, by the most careful investigation, to present pupils, in the various grades, in as good a condition as to scholarship, and with as orderly habits, as those schools which I had always looked upon, and which many of my fellow teachers to this day look upon, as necessarily being, in consequence of better locations, every way superior to them. I could not fail to see, nor could I avoid seeing, whatever my previous convictions as to the plan of noting the results of the examinations, that this very plan had been the principal lever by which these changes had mostly been wrought, and this efficiency, which has met the commendation of so many competent judges, been chiefly promoted. I could devise no suitable substitute, nor have I ever yet heard of one, which my two years' experience does not conclusively show me would be a step backward.

I am therefore under every obligation, from the requests of the Committee, from an honest desire for the best good of the

schools, and from a sense of justice towards those my associates "who have had it as a part of their daily duty to employ this instrument," to testify as I have done. My opposition to the system, even to the last fragment of it, was as honest as that of any of my fellow teachers, and certainly as outspoken; and if to-day, as the result of a wider view, and a better knowledge, I make the admissions I have now made, I stand acquitted, in my own conscience at least, from all charge of moral cowardice. I might have preserved a prudent silence, and left the duty of this vindication to others; and I cannot conclude this part of my remarks without the confession, reluctant though it may be, that in my judgment the abolition asked for would be a serious blow to the efficiency of the system.

There is one other subject, Mr. Chairman, which I approach with even more concern. I refer to those bitter and sweeping charges which have been made by certain of the Assistants against their Principals. That evils have existed, and *do* exist, arising from immature promotions, I know, and have distinctly stated. That these should form a portion of the testimony of the Assistants was exactly what I anticipated. But I did not expect that such bitter and pointed personal allusions would have been made; intensified in their injustice by the *over-statements of fact*, unintentional, no doubt, and the result of want of careful reflection, but none the less *over-statements* and one-sided statements, and made in a spirit which bodes no good to the continued efficiency of the internal organization of the departments.

The continuous and wide-spread complaints of the natural guardians are referred to, yet not a particle of evidence brought forward on this point. These complaints are pronounced well-founded in the *unanimous* conviction of the teachers. What sort of unanimity may be inferred from the smallness of the number who have discussed them in counsel, and their own wide difference of opinion? Principals are modestly requested virtually to allow their subordinates to do all the promoting, by means of the class records; and what sort of record that too often is, and the character of the judgment to be thus formed of the real condition of the individual pupil, every Principal knows. Verbatim recitations, mechanical processes, definitions mechanically learned and recited, too often are the basis, as our own examinations

show, of the class teacher's judgment of fitness for promotion ; yet this, when put down in a book, it is asserted, "is the true measure of proficiency." It is further stated, that it is the ambition of the Principals to have as few classes in the lower grades as possible, which charge is, indeed, as it ought to be, *honorably true* ; but how is it characterized and illustrated ? On page 84, I read :

"In the same way, it is considered desirable to have as few classes in the lower grades as possible. For it would not be so reputable to have several classes representing the same low grade, or parts of grade, and thus separated for the convenience of effective teaching, as it would to have but one. It would be too great a preponderance of the baser elements, and so the honor of the school demands that they shall be disguised and compressed within the limits of a single class, in order to heighten the general effect. *In this way, more than a hundred children are frequently* placed in one class, and the same spirit that puts them there, further requires that these whole hundred children, by the unaided efforts of but one teacher, shall be accomplished not only in the lowest, but also in parts of the next highest grade, if it be within the reach of human energy and endurance."

Nothing could show so complete a want of sympathy with difficulties under which the responsible Grammar School Principal unavoidably labors, and so evident a desire to make out a case. *Occasional* and temporary instances such as this may have here and there occurred, and must so occur, under the regulations of this Board, as to the number of teachers furnished to each department, and the transfer of one or several large classes from the Primary Schools and Departments. If it be at all true in the sense which would justify the assertion that "*more than one hundred children are frequently* in one class," surely the *class records* should give some *trace* of it ; yet after diligent search, running back several years in the archives of our department, and taking the actual register number, and the average monthly attendance of the classes, *as given by the Assistants themselves*, I cannot find a single instance on the records ; and I can positively testify that the highest *register* number, let alone the *attendance* for the months previous to examination, that

I have found in any Grammar School class for the last two years, is only 85 ; that there were only two or three over 80 ; not more than a dozen over 75 ; and that an attendance of 70 is far above the average in these lower classes. So much for the spirit and character of the over statements of some of the representatives of the Assistants, who would almost seem to desire to dispense with their Principals, and "run the schools" themselves. Very appositely, though for a far different purpose than I, has one fair representative quoted from Thomas Fuller's "Mix't Contemplations on these Times." "Fair and softly goeth far—but alas! we have too many fiery spirits among us, who, with Jehu, drive on so furiously, they will overturn all, if the furiousness be not seasonably retrenched."

Upon reading the whole series of these complaints through, it must be a matter of profound astonishment to those who do not know the *whole* truth, that we can keep our classes half supplied with teachers, let alone the fact that so few think they can better their condition by leaving the profession, except to get married, and that when one does so leave, at least a score are anxious to subject themselves to the very tyranny which has thereby been escaped.

In conclusion, let me say, that while concerned lest this discussion should result in injury to the system, it is gratifying to observe that nearly all the complaints made, have reference to the excess of energy and devotedness manifested by the Principals. These ladies and gentlemen are laboring under difficulties, many of which are traditional in our system ; the leading error in *their* statements having been, in my judgment, the confounding of cause and effect. They have charged upon the system, and Course of Studies, and the examinations, evils which have their real origin in the neglect to carry out and conform to laws which the Board long ago established. And, again, in explanation of this, it is to be said that, through the power of local influences, established reputation, and of long usage, conformity to these laws has hitherto been, in many cases, a matter of difficulty, of certain annoyance, and of unpleasant and unsatisfactory explanation to the local authorities ; while a real power to enforce them has but recently been lodged with the Board of Education.

But cause for anxiety on this score, thanks to the extended and protecting power of the Board, no longer exists, and I am authorized to say, not only in my own name, but in this particular in that of my associates, that, so far are we from being willing, quietly or with indifference, to look on and see an injustice wrought to deserving teachers of any grade, by means of the recorded results of our examinations, that we would, and will, and must, make it our special business to stand as their champions in any such case, should it arise; and for myself individually, I would say, that whenever it shall appear that my duties must be such as to exert an unjust and injurious pressure upon my fellow-teachers, I no longer want the position.

I cannot but regret that, through force of circumstances, parties whose interests are so essentially identical, as Superintendents, Principals, and subordinate teachers, should thus, through this unfortunate agitation, be thrown into *quasi* opposition to each other. I have faith in the sincerity and devotedness of the teachers, even as I have in that of the department in which I am myself a subordinate. Burdened with large schools, very much *too* large, in many cases, for the true interest of all concerned, with frequent and disastrous breaks in the line of competent teachers, by the insertion or retention of incompetent or half-competent ones, not having the advantages which, in nearly every other great city and in many a small city, both in this country and in Europe, arise from a Daily Normal and Training School—obliged, therefore, in the midst of the overwhelming pressure of other duties, to train young and inexperienced teachers, first for this position and then for that—responsible to parents, responsible to local school officers, responsible to Commissioners and to Superintendents, each of which classes of persons takes a different view of the nature of those responsibilities,—periodically flooded with primary promotions, for whom a place must be found, the Principal's position is no sinecure; it is one of incessant, persistent, and harassing labor and anxiety, of which no subordinate, from the Seventh Grade to the Vice-Principal, can form any adequate idea.

And yet, under all this burden, their energy and skill have nobly assisted to lift these schools into the proud position which they now occupy, and which is only the starting point, if we



are wise and prudent, for a yet more glorious future. With very few exceptions, they are earnest and devoted workers in the great cause, and are the very last wilfully to put in jeopardy the system in which they take honest and legitimate pride.

Yet I cannot but feel that they have undesignedly done so, and that they have furnished the many and bitter, the powerful and jealous, and ever-watchful adversaries of our system of Public Instruction with formidable weapons of attack, from which they would be the first to suffer, and which will most certainly be used.

I have spoken at so much greater length than I thought, that I cannot here indicate the nature of the simple adjustments which, in my judgment, would have the effect of firmly closing our ranks and presenting an unbroken front; if indicated at all, they should be after due consultation with my official chief, which his health and mine have alike precluded. But whatever changes may be made, they should not, in my judgment, disturb our present excellent Course of Study, or the methods of examination and report; nor should they, on the other hand, take away one iota of that freedom of action, with its commensurate responsibility, which of right inheres in the Principals, and which, when under just regulation and supervision, is the indispensable element in the progressive vitality of our system.

On the conclusion of Mr. HARRISON's remarks, Assistant Superintendent N. A. CALKINS addressed the Committee. He said:

MR. CHAIRMAN, AND GENTLEMEN OF THE COMMITTEE:

Upon the main points of the subject under consideration, so far as it relates to Primary Schools, there seems to be little necessity for comments from those representing the Superintendents' Department. Indeed, it appears that after the most searching criticism has been invited upon the Primary Course of Instruction, attended by long agitation and repeated discussions, in meetings composed of Principals, and in other meetings of Vice-Principals, and in still other meetings of Primary Assistants; and in addition to all of these, by frequent communications in the daily papers, the following conclusions have been presented as the unanimous opinions of these several bodies of teachers:

From the Primary Principals: "We are perfectly satisfied with the present Course of Studies. We do not think the children are over-tasked."

From the Primary Vice-Principals: "The present Course of Studies does not, in our estimation, over-tax either teachers or pupils."

- From the Primary Assistants: "In Arithmetic, too much is required in the First Grade to insure proficiency."

In this connection, a remark by one of the Delegates from the Primary Vice Principals may be alluded to. In stating "the arguments which induced the adoption of their resolutions, she said:

"While we are *unanimous in our approval* of the grades of studies as now pursued in the Primary Schools, we *earnestly suggest* a modification of the requirements of the grades, so far as relates to the studies of Elementary Sounds and Objects."

Mr. Chairman: Since both sides of this question have been presented by the Delegate from the Primary Vice-Principals—on the one side "*unanimously approving*," and on the other side only "*earnestly suggesting*" a "mere modification," I suppose it will be perfectly safe to leave this part of the subject in the hands of the Committee, without further remarks upon it.

By these several unanimous reports, approving the present Course of Instruction for the Primary Schools, with the single exceptions already alluded to, the "Committee on the Course of Studies" have been highly complimented for their good judgment in recommending this Course for adoption; and the Board of Education is highly honored in having in its employ a thousand teachers who so fully appreciate the proper instruction to secure the foundation of a thorough Primary Education to the children of our Public Schools.

Mr. Chairman, from the Preamble and Resolutions adopted by the Board of Education, requesting the City Superintendent, his Assistants, and others, to appear before this Committee, and present "all available information on the subject" pertaining to the studies, and "the rules governing the acquisition and teaching," it seems to be perfectly appropriate that other points than the Course of Studies should receive attention, es-

pecially so far as these relate to the management of the schools ; and I trust that these subjects will receive ample consideration in the deliberations of your Committee. With this hope, I beg leave to present a few facts and suggestions bearing upon those points which I regard as the most serious and important now affecting the prosperity of our Primary Schools, namely, the *over-crowded* classes for the youngest children, and the *frequent transfers of successful teachers* from these classes.

Both of these subjects have been presented with great unanimity of views by the Delegates from the Primary Schools.

#### NUMBER OF CHILDREN ATTENDING OUR PRIMARY SCHOOLS.

From statistics gathered during the present school year, it has been ascertained that the monthly attendance in our Primary Schools and Departments is about 60,000 children.

That 16,000 of them belong to the classes of the Sixth, or lowest Grade.

That 11,500 belong to classes of the 5th Grade.

That 10,500 belong to the 4th Grade ;

That 8,500 belong to the 3d Grade ;

That 7,000 belong to the 2d Grade ;

That 6,500 only belong to the First, or highest Grade.

From these statistics, it will be seen that *one-third* of all the children attending our Primary Schools leave school, from various causes, before completing the lower half of the Course of Instruction ; that *one-half* of the children leave school before entering the Second Grade ; and that not more than *one-third* of them enter the Grammar Departments. Thus *two-thirds* of all the children attending our Primary Schools receive all their school education without entering the Grammar Departments. By whom are the children in the two lowest grades taught ?

You are perfectly well aware, gentlemen, that it is the usual practice to appoint Graduates of our Female Grammar Departments to take charge of the lowest classes in our Primary Schools. From the statistics already given it will be seen that about *one-half* of all the children in these schools are in the classes of the lower grades. But this is by no means the greatest evil affecting the welfare of these schools.

By personal visitation I have ascertained from the Principals

of twenty Primary Schools and Departments (ten of each), located in thirteen different Wards, the number of pupils in all the grades, and in each class in these schools.

From these numbers I have ascertained the average number of children for each teacher in the classes of the several grades. In the two highest and the two lowest grades, the numbers are as follows :

The average number of children to *each teacher*—

|                           |     |
|---------------------------|-----|
| In the 1st Grade is ..... | 38  |
| “ 2d “ “ .....            | 43  |
| “ 5th “ “ .....           | 71  |
| “ 6th “ “ .....           | 156 |

Thus, it appears that not only are the young teachers placed in charge of the youngest children, but they are required to teach *four times as many* as the teachers of the older pupils in the First Grade.

I am aware that this statement is not true of every school in the city ; but there are many schools where these numbers are far too small to represent the actual size of the lower classes. I have found Sixth Grade Classes ranging from 170 to 269 children under the care of a single teacher ! I am happy, however, to be able to state, that since calling attention to the great inequality of numbers in classes of the highest and lowest grades, in my last Annual Report, these extreme cases have become less common.

I am sure that the great importance of this subject will commend it to the candid consideration of all the members of this Committee, and I trust that some rules may be recommended for adoption, which will prevent the possibility of all extremes in over-crowding classes.

To this end I would respectfully suggest that the Committee recommend to the Board of Education for adoption some by-law which shall provide : That no Principal nor teacher shall admit into any class of the Sixth Grade, to be taught by one teacher, or by two teachers in the same class, more than one hundred children.

That in all classes above the Sixth Grade the register number shall not exceed seventy-five children for any class.

That no more than the numbers above specified for their respective grades shall be allowed either on register or in attendance.

This last provision is necessary, from the fact that it sometimes happens that more children are found in the class than the teacher has entered in the roll-book. I have been informed that this plan is pursued in order to ascertain whether the children will continue in school; to save the labor of entering their names one week, and discharging them the next. I may add that I know that a plan of admitting and discharging once a week is the practice in many schools.

I am well aware, Mr. Chairman, that to fix the maximum numbers in the classes of the different grades at seventy-five and one hundred will allow more pupils in a class than any teacher should be required to take charge of at once, but I am induced to suggest this liberal allowance because our present school accommodations are not sufficient to permit all to attend school that seek admission. But when that "good time coming" arrives with ample school-room for all the children of the city of New York, I would reduce the maximum register number to sixty children for each teacher. Forty-six pupils is the maximum number allowed to each teacher in the schools of Boston and Providence; while in the Primary Classes of Chicago and St. Louis the number is about seventy. It may be said, by some, that this overcrowding of classes is the fault of ambitious Principals who desire to obtain as much salary as their most favored fellow Principals; for which ambition who would censure them? It might be charged to the great anxiety of parents to have their children attend school, and the desire of school trustees that the children of their numerous friends shall all be accommodated in this respect; but from whatever source it may arise, I am quite sure that the provisions herein suggested will check this evil, and render this class of our schools much more efficient in meeting the educational needs of those who attend them.

#### FREQUENT TRANSFERS OF TEACHERS.

Much might be said in opposition to the practice of frequent transfers of successful teachers from the lower classes of the Primary Schools.



It is well known to those who are familiar with the results of teachers' work in these lower classes, that, under the instruction of some teachers, the children will attain greater proficiency in *all* the studies prescribed for the class, in *three months*, than they would in only a part of these studies in *six months*, under the charge of other teachers. And I regret that, owing to the frequent changes of the best teachers from the Primary Schools, it may be said, the number of teachers who, after spending four or five months with a class in the lower grades, fail to teach them one half as much, or as well as the teachers of skill and experience do in three months, is ten times greater than those of the latter class.

Now, Mr. Chairman, if skill, tact, ingenuity, aptitude, and success in teaching, are worth anything, in any position, it most certainly is exceedingly valuable and necessary for those children that are receiving their first impressions of education. The very *manner of learning*, even with the youngest children in school, becomes a *habit*, and gives more character to their future mental actions than the facts learned. That the *manner* of teaching should be *right* here, becomes, therefore, highly important.

Give us education, is the cry that comes up from a hundred thousand children in our city. Is this demand for *quantity* alone? Nay, it is for *quality* as well. Indeed, *quality* is more important than quantity. It is *quality of education* in childhood that best prepares the way for quantity through the subsequent self-education of manhood. It gives intellectual, moral, and practical principles, without which the future man might pass through life devoid of any purpose of self-improvement, and without the power of profiting by its experience. Early education is the mould for giving shape to the future character.

To know that which should be taught to the younger children in our schools, forms but a small part of the attainments needed for those who are employed to teach this class of children.

The chief ability needed for this work is the knowledge of *how to present the facts to the children*, so that they will early form habits of observation, of thinking, and the power of readily acquiring accurate knowledge from everything around them, as well as from books.

To perform this kind of work successfully in our Primary Classes, requires great aptitude for teaching and experience added, or special training for the work.

When we remember, in view of the facts already stated, that it is the common practice to place young teachers, without either *experience* or *special training*, over the younger children in our Primary Schools; and what is still worse, that so soon as any one of these displays any special talent for teaching successfully, some one invites her to a position in a Grammar School, with more salary, who can justly say there is no change needed in this matter? With that part of the appreciation of the services of an excellent teacher which is expressed by more dollars, I most heartily sympathize; but I should rejoice more to have it accompanied by the approving words: "You are doing your work exceedingly well in your present position, and we desire you to remain in it, therefore give you more salary, that you may not wish to leave it."

Since the teachers of the classes in the four lower grades give all the instruction which one-half of all the children in the Primary Schools receive; and since some of these teachers are required to take charge of from *three* to *five* times as many children as those who teach the First and Second Grade classes, it does seem that the wants of the children, that *justice*, and *reason*, and *common sense*, all demand for these positions teachers of *experience* and *skill*.

Mr. Chairman, I am well aware that an entire correction of this last evil—the frequent transfers of the best teachers from the Primary Schools—would require a radical change in the present plans of assigning teachers to positions in grades of classes, and to some extent, also, in the plans of advancing salaries. Having endeavored briefly to show the necessity of improvements on these points, I shall conclude by earnestly commending the subject to the careful consideration and sound judgment of this Committee, hoping that it will devise some plan for improving in this respect our otherwise excellent school system.

Thanking you, gentlemen, for your kind attention, I will only add, that should the Committee desire my views upon other topics that have been brought to notice, relative to the

Primary Schools, I shall take pleasure in communicating them in such a manner as you may suggest.

The CHAIRMAN then announced Superintendent WILLIAM JONES, who continued the discussion as follows :

MR. CHAIRMAN, AND GENTLEMEN OF THE COMMITTEE :

I did not deem it either prudent or wise to prepare any statement to be presented to you, for the reason that I did not know what topics would be embraced in my colleague's speech. He being ill, desired to speak first, and to present his views on the questions under discussion, and I consented for him to do so. I have, therefore, but little to say, and shall not occupy very much of your time.

I only came here at the close of this discussion to make a brief allusion to some of the subjects presented, and to ask you to consider them with us. I do not appear here in any way as an antagonist of the Principals, Vice-Principals, or teachers, or of any one who has taken part in the investigation. My relations with them—all of them—are pleasant and friendly, and I have not an unkind word to utter, nor do I think an unkind word has been intentionally uttered by any one during the discussion, or that occasion has so far arisen for any unkind utterance. I came here to consider with you, Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, together with the delegates who are here around us, the interests of the children committed to our care, and the cause generally. The Principals and teachers of the Primary Departments have justly complained of many grievances to which they have been subjected ; but I am not aware, sir, that some of them can be remedied by this course which we are pursuing. I think they are beyond the present means of the Board of Education to reach them ; and I think, further, that they are worthy of your consideration and attention, even as advanced at this investigation, so that when the opportunity for correction does arise, and comes regularly before the Board, the grievances complained of may be remedied and removed.

My colleague, as you are already informed, has referred to the over-crowding of the schools, and particularly of the lower classes. This is an evil which we believe does, to some extent, exist, but it will be found to owe its existence to the system of

promotions of your classes as stated here already by some of the teachers. I called attention to this fact in the very first report I had the honor to make and submit to this Board—which was in 1857—and since that time I have also several times referred to it. But still it is agreed, and seems to be widely understood, that this evil prevails to a considerable degree. Now, the law of this State permits children from the age of four to twenty-one years to enter our schools for the purposes of receiving instruction. Sir, a large number of our lower classes are indeed terribly over-crowded, and by children from four to six years of age! What is the remedy? I think, sir, that there is a remedy which would not be very difficult to adopt, and it is, that when Principals find that they have already a greater number of pupils in the classes than they can accommodate, they should refuse to receive these children until they have room for them, by reason of promotion of former scholars, or vacancies. The greater proportion of pupils in these lower classes are little children, and this way of over-crowding them is exceedingly detrimental to their health, and is a leading cause of that physical injury which we hear of in later years. That is the complaint of the Principals; and with all kindness, sir, I may be permitted to state that the cause of this complaint is in a great measure attributable to them, in their eagerness to secure for their schools a large number of scholars. Of course, my colleague and myself do not complain of this desire on their part to have a very large school. It is not our purpose to complain of the existence of this feeling or wish, but I think we should be warned in the matter, as I do not believe that it is at all proper that we should gratify our ambition by proclaiming that we have the largest school in the city, if it is at the expense of health.

There are many cases in which discretion should be exercised in the matter of admitting fresh pupils when the classes are over-crowded, but of course it must be unpleasant to the Principal to reject so many applicants. In some class-rooms there are two teachers—one teaches, and the other attends to the order, and in one room, for want of space, I have known two classes taught by two teachers at the same time! These practices, however necessary under present circumstances, I would have

honored more in the omission than in the observance of them, and hope some day to learn are discontinued, because of the greater facilities which have been afforded to those schools.

The transfer of teachers from the Primary to the Grammar Departments is complained of by the Principals of the former as a grievance, and I think very justly. When a teacher exhibits more than usual tact, or develops more than ordinary talent under the skillful training of these Principals, then come the Trustees, at the instance of the Principals of the Grammar Schools, and transfer these valuable assistants to the latter, forgetting that both talent and tact are necessary to success in a Primary as well as in a Grammar Department. In place of the talented one taken, a young and inexperienced teacher, fresh from the Class of Graduates, is sent, who must in like manner be trained, but perhaps with less successful results. In this manner, while the upper department has been the gainer, the lower one has lost what is not easily supplied. Sir, let the Primaries keep the teachers who possess such excellent tact and talent, and pay them what such ability deserves. They are needed there, as well as elsewhere. Especially are they required to teach the lower classes, where tact is productive of such excellent results. I believe that the very best teachers should be assigned to those classes, instead of the young and inexperienced ones so generally found there, surrounded with such appalling difficulties. I would have the Principal intrusted with the power to assign a teacher to any class where she could do the most essential service. She might retain her rank and receive pay for the same, and yet, because experienced and more capable, could be more useful among the younger pupils. "As the twig is bent, the tree is inclined," and we must begin with the young sapling, and not wait until it becomes the strong and mighty oak, if we would have it to possess the symmetry of form which we desire. I see before me to-night a Vice-Principal, who willingly left the First Class and took charge of two gallery classes, then under the care of young teachers. Recently I examined them, and awarded to each very high marks of excellence. The efficiency of these teachers, and the results of the examination, were in no small degree due to the training of that Vice-Principal, and not so much to these young teachers, not-



withstanding their success. I hope, sir, that the Committee will look a little into these evils, and if any remedy can be applied, will apply it. Some of the delegates at this investigation have also asked that the pupils of the two higher classes be allowed to take home their books. Sir, I am not in favor of studying lessons at home by the pupils in our Primary Departments. But the ladies say, that after the lessons in the Reader are given, while in school, if the children in those classes could only take it home, they could carefully read them, and be better qualified to recite them the next morning. This, sir, is very likely to be so ; but whatever rule the Board of Education adopts, should be of a general application, and every Principal should conform thereto. I have heard of schools where children of the higher classes leave to attend another, assigning as a reason that in the latter they can take home their books. Of course, sir, you readily see that one school is benefited at the expense of the other. Sir, I shall not allow myself to occupy your time only for a few minutes longer, and shall briefly allude to one other subject. Of the twelve hundred teachers employed in the Primary Departments, or schools, not one of them has come here and objected to the present system of marking the results of the examinations. On the contrary, throughout the Primary Departments, every teacher seems to be in favor of this very system. They do not appear to me to be terrified by the approach of the Superintendent, and in a period of twelve years passed among them, I have never yet seen them betray any peculiar alarm. They seem to be cheerful and agreeable, and if they have any great fear of the examinations, I certainly have not seen it at all ; indeed, when I have been going around among them, they have welcomed me with apparent pleasure and confidence, though I have no doubt, after knowing the results, they are a little better satisfied when I leave them than when I come, and if, therefore, this marking system has terrors, the terrors are not experienced by the teachers in the Primary Departments. If you could, sir, look into the records of the School Trustees, you will find that more teachers are requested to resign, or who do resign, at the request of the Principals, than were ever thought of being asked to at the solicitation of the Superintendents, because their marks did not come up to a required number. I have filled

positions as a school officer for eight years ; three years as member of this Board, and five years as a trustee, and, of my own knowledge, I know that we removed teachers at the request of the Principals, who complained of their inefficiency to us ; and I think, therefore, that the teachers should be more afraid of the Principals than of the Superintendents. And it is proper, sir, that this should be the case ; for the Principals are with the teachers constantly, and know who are efficient, or inefficient ; and I think they have the right to present to the Board of Trustees such facts as shall be for the general interest of the pupils and the schools at large. But, in their complaints here, the delegates have rather overstated their case. How many teachers have been dismissed because their marks did not come up to the seventy-five per cent ? Consult this matter yourselves and see if it has any foundation in fact. I think you will find that it has none. There is still another form to the question ; and that is, why was this change made from adjectives of degree to numerals ? I do not ask the question and anticipate the answer ; nor do I answer the question myself, but let me read from the published report of Vice-Principal Carlisle's remarks, p. 59-60.

“ The system which is recommended is the one which was adopted by the Superintendents when they laid aside their first system of marking by numerals. Why they afterwards replaced it with another system of numerals, I do not know. But every one does know that while it was in use, notwithstanding the fact that it had been devised to obviate the objections made against the employment of numerals, the Superintendents used to be besieged by teachers the moment the examination of their class was ended, to learn—not the epithet he had awarded—they would not be satisfied with that—but the arithmetical result of the calculation by which the epithet was determined. They must have the figures. This may explain the abandonment of the plan.”

That is just it, gentlemen of the Committee ; “ they must have the figures,” and they can, by this means, tell more satisfactorily how they stand in their examinations in comparison with other schools. Sir, he tells the truth. I for ten years examined the lower classes in the Grammar Schools, and, so far as he refers

to them, I can bear testimony to the fact. The teachers did desire to have the adjective plan of marking superseded by the numerals; and I think that eight out of ten teachers would say—give us the marking system as it now stands. And why should they not, sir? It has been said that in large classes we have marked numerically, and did not take into consideration the difference in the size of the classes. Sir, that is not so. If we had a class which was not behind in its examination, and which was marked by us in such a manner that the class and teacher were deprived of the merit that is due them, why are not those ladies here remonstrating against a system which they know to be unjust? But they are here asking for the retention of a system which is a satisfaction to them, because it shows them wherein they have been efficient, and wherein they have been deficient.

But, gentlemen, it is not my purpose to continue this discussion any longer. You have been here two nights preceding this present session, and the investigation has been already protracted far beyond what it was anticipated; and, for myself, I must say that I hardly considered it necessary to consider these subjects here at all, but my colleague thought otherwise, and as it has been done, I merely give my views on those few points I have presented. Some of you have been longer connected with the Public Schools than I have been, and are consequently better qualified to express your views upon the subject before us, and your opinions upon the views already presented. But I wish, in concluding, just to remind you again, that a system attended with such results as have marked the progress of the present one, and which is such a great power for good, should be zealously guarded. A system which has done so much for the advancement of the cause of public education, and which I take pride in saying is, in a great measure, due to the co-operation of the Superintendent and his senior assistant, whose experience no one can for a moment question, should be proved to be manifestly erroneous, or difficult in its principles of working, before any radically different changes and innovations are sought to be introduced. The subject of ventilation has been alluded to in the course of the investigation, but we have not taken up that line of discussion. That will be treated of more fully by

the Superintendent of Buildings, who has considered the subject more elaborately than we could have done, and where it is desirable he has suggested a remedy. With your kind permission, we will now hear from him. Gentlemen, I thank you for your kind attention.

MR. JAMES L. MILLER, Superintendent of Buildings and Repairs, then rose, and said: Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen—I would state that I have prepared a document (which I now hold in my hand) on this subject of ventilation; it contains a number of suggestions in reference to the subject, which the Teachers should peruse carefully.

As some of the gentlemen who desire to reply to arguments this afternoon, have requested me not to read this lengthy paper, I have concluded to submit it to the Committee without reading, and then have it embodied in my annual report, which will be printed before the opening of the Schools in September.

Commissioner WARREN—It was stated that if any new points, which those who have addressed the Committee had omitted, were desired to be introduced, they should be presented at the close of the leading discussion. I think it is also the opinion of the Committee that the Principals who have spoken here shall now have the privilege of replying to some misunderstanding of their remarks, or to some allegations which have been made concerning some of them.

Commissioner MERRILL—I will say, on behalf of the Committee, that it is desirable that those gentlemen or ladies who speak should be as brief as possible, and confine themselves strictly to the subject matter before the Committee, and without going over the whole subject, respond merely to such new points as the Superintendents have discussed, but which were not alluded to by the Principals.

Superintendent KIDDLE—Mr. Chairman, it having been just remarked by a member of your Committee that the privilege is to be given to the Principals of replying to “allegations touching their integrity,” I must beg leave, as one of the speakers, to disavow having made any such allegations; and if any of my remarks have given any such impression, I certainly had no intention that they should do so. I had no intention whatever

of impeaching the private, professional, or official integrity of any person present.

DAVID B. SCOTT (Principal of Grammar School No. 40) then addressed the Committee, as follows :

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen of the Committee—The privilege which has been accorded to me by your honorable body I do not under-estimate. What I have prepared for this evening is an answer not only to “allegations,” but, as I conceived them to be, attacks on some of the delegates, or attacks on the Principals through their delegates. When, therefore, the gentleman enters his disclaimer, and means to be understood as not having attacked anybody, we must go by the gentleman’s speech. What he then said was made plain enough to all of us by the tone and language in which it was uttered. Moreover, the gentleman had four weeks to prepare his reply to the argument of the Principals, and during three of those four weeks the remarks of their delegates were in print. I think it is rather late now for the gentleman to make a disclaimer. The only regret I have, therefore, is that we did not hear that disclaimer before to-night: that is the chief difficulty. With your permission, Mr. Chairman, I will now proceed.

Mr. Chairman, we have arrived at the fourth evening of this discussion, already protracted far beyond the time to which many of us thought it would extend. I shall endeavor to be mindful of this, and condense what I have to say in reply within the smallest limits.

Some of the Superintendents profess to consider the principal objections to the Course of Studies as in a great degree frivolous, yet they have consumed a large portion of two evenings of this discussion. One of these gentlemen alone occupied one hour and twenty minutes in his answer, and yet began by saying that the teachers’ charges and testimony, in “their generality, vagueness, and insufficiency, would be inadequate to convict the pettiest criminal of the smallest offence known to the law.”

May I be allowed to occupy your attention for a moment by restating the origin of this discussion? The Board of Education passed a resolution referring to your Committee the subject that is now before us. Your Committee decided to call for information from the different classes of teachers, and ordered that this



should be presented by delegates chosen from each class. The teachers are here in obedience to your call. They did not originate these rumors on which your Board acted. They have not run before they were sent. They have not rudely thrust their opinions before you. They have not even memorialized the Board of Education, which years ago was considered by one or two officials almost a crime. They have simply performed a duty enjoined upon them by the Board of Education through your Committee, and for the non-performance of which they might have been most justly censured. Furthermore, they have presented their views, in every instance save two, with singular courtesy, and entirely devoid of personalities.

What becomes, then, of that profoundly affecting flight of the imagination in which we were called to look upon the noble mother of the School System, sitting behind a felon's bar, with great drops, big as Cleopatra's pearls, falling from her downcast eyes—a weeping Niobe, wounded in the house of her friends. Then, sir, as if this were not affecting enough, there was super-added that extract from Byron, to point the shaft against the unfortunate teachers as the cause of this profane treatment of the noble and much abused lady.

Now, sir, were this flight of imagination ever so true as well as striking, and were the poetry which accompanied it much more applicable, I assert that the teachers, especially the Principals, are not responsible for any such touching and pitiable results. Besides, sir, what right has any gentleman to arraign the teachers of the city, when they have been called by the Board of Education to state their views on matters of importance, as having done their best to degrade the Common School System. Against whom do his remarks really point? Not against the teachers, but against the Board of Education; for they so far gave credence to the rumors they heard as to give them their serious attention, ordered this investigation, and insisted that the teachers should state their views. I leave him, therefore, to settle this matter with the Board, who have the weeping Niobe in charge.

But, sir, I affirm that the gentleman's flight of imagination is simply that and—"nothing more." There is no noble lady sitting wounded in the house of her friends, unless the Superintendents wish to have themselves regarded in that condition.

In what way has the Common School System been indecently exposed by its "thoughtless children?" The Principals presented three points—Outlines, Reviews of previous Grades, and the Marking System. The Vice-Principals enforced these points, and asked, in addition, that the requirements in the three higher grades be reduced. Will any gentleman say there was anything improper in this? There was none. Nor did the conduct of the Assistants justify the gentleman's sweeping censure. They had a right to present to your Committee anything in the general management of the schools that seriously affected their health and comfort. They did so. I could have wished that, in one or two instances, these statements had been put just a little less offensively. But they had a right to speak, and they, no doubt, thought they were fully justified in the complaints they made. How far does their conduct differ from that of the Superintendents, who dwelt with manifest enjoyment on the shortcomings of the Principals, and yet by these very gentlemen the 2,500 or more teachers of New York, appearing here by their delegates, are all rebuked in a passionate and fatherly way, as "thoughtless children."

But, Mr. Chairman, there was a spectacle presented here the other evening far more striking than the gentleman's fancy sketch already alluded to. That was the jubilant way in which one of the gentlemen, mentioning by name two of the delegates from the assistant teachers, gave them his earnest public congratulation for the manner in which they had exposed the doings of the Principals. Was that the way to show a decent regard for the interests of the noble lady whose condition was so lamentably bewailed by the next speaker?

It is stated by one of the gentlemen on the opposite side that there is a very striking inconsistency between one of the resolutions of the Male Principals and the argument advanced by one of their delegates. That resolution affirms that "too much work is demanded from teachers and pupils." It is quite possible that the remarks of the delegate on this point may not have been as distinctly put as they ought to have been. A few moments' explanation will make it clear that there was no inconsistency. The resolution presents the views of the Principals as approved at their two meetings. How was

the strain exerted on the physical and mental energies of teachers and pupils? By the indeterminateness of the work, and needless reviews of previous grades, and last, but not least, through the marking system. The reviews of completed grades, in particular, made a great deal of class-work full of anxiety to teachers, as well as pupils. Does any one suppose that a teacher can be anxious and worried for weeks at a time, driving the pupils, nervously, in view of examination, on a great amount of back work, in the shape of reviews of a past grade, and not strain the pupils also? It is simply impossible.

But in the matter of home-work, required by the Course of Studies, the delegate stated his own opinions, so far as his own opinions and inquiries—the printer made it “*energies*”—enabled him to answer. He holds modified views on this point. So do others. And he did not object to the passage of the resolution, because it covered other and important ground, as already stated. For this reason the delegate used the pronoun “*I*,” in speaking of the home-work, in order that there might be no possibility of mistaking his individual views for those of many of his fellow Principals. I am sorry to see that this use of the pronoun has proved a great offence to our opponents, for I find it italicised repeatedly by the gentleman, in the quotation he makes from my remarks. Your Committee heard what my associate said on the resolution. His views were different from mine on the matter of home study; but I have no doubt he represents a much more extended opinion on that point than my own.

It is charged that the resolutions offered before your Committee, with so much “parade of unanimity,” do not represent the great body of the teachers of New York. Now, so far as the Male Principals are concerned, this has no force. There was present at the different meetings a greater number of Principals than had assembled at any time for years, larger, in fact, than even the question of salaries brought together in 1893; and that, you know, ought to have been reason enough for a general meeting. It is possible—barely possible—that there may be two or three Principals whose opinions the views we have advanced do not represent. If there are any, the gentlemen, although duly notified, were not present at our meetings. Besides, sir, any one can see that it is comparatively far easier to assemble and combine five

men in support of any measure, than to do the same with fifty. If the peculiarities, and perhaps jealousies, among five men are not a slight thing, what must be the rivalries among fifty men, fostered and increased by peculiarities attached to the system under which these fifty work? But in spite of this, these meetings were most respectable in numbers, and there were no dissenting voices. Therefore, I affirm that these resolutions represent, substantially, the opinion of the great body of the Male Principals of New York. The force of this unanimity of opinion cannot be broken by "the denial" of the gentleman—or that "they are the writer's own opinions, bolstered up by answers to special and leading interrogatories." *Define our work more carefully. Make our work reasonable and fair in amount. Estimate properly and judiciously that work when finished.* These are the three points that the Principals present with unshaken unanimity. Thus much for the numerical value and unanimity of the Male Principals' meetings.

How is it with the Assistants' meetings? While arraigning the numerical weakness of the Assistants, these gentlemen are perfectly ready to accept their resolutions when they are in their own favor. Poor meetings, paltry in numbers, with no right to represent the views of the teachers, when they pass such resolutions as this:

*"Resolved, That the system of marking, as pursued by the City Superintendents at the Annual Examinations, is an unfair method of denoting the capabilities of the teacher; and the publicity given to these marks makes them, in many cases, a weapon which may be boldly used to harass, degrade, condemn, and remove the teacher from her position. The effect of this system is very injurious upon both the physical and mental health of the teacher, and, of necessity, acts in an injurious manner on the pupils."*

But there is no objection to the size of the meetings when such a resolution as this is passed and enforced by the delegates:

*"Resolved, That one of the great obstacles to success in teaching our respective classes is the very imperfect manner in which promotions and admissions are made."*

*Then, Mr. Chairman, the views of the Assistants become im-*

portant: *then* their numerical weakness is a trifling matter; for they have furnished a weapon to the Superintendents which your Committee have seen how thoroughly these gentlemen used.

We are now brought naturally to the charge of the Assistants and Superintendents, that the overwork of the teachers, and of pupils, if any, is, in a very great degree, owing to the anxiety on the part of the Principals to make promotions of unprepared pupils, or to crowd the classes for their own selfish or ambitious purposes. We are thus face to face with a sweeping, but distinct charge.

Who are these Principals? Are all the schools involved in this condemnation? Or is it confined to a few? Is it necessary to say that it cannot be true of the schools generally? It is *not true*, we honestly believe, of any considerable number of the Male Grammar Schools.

But the Superintendents say that they have been long perfectly well aware of these misdoings on the part of the Principals. Hear what they say: "While Principals send representatives to inveigh against the Course of Study as the cause of excessive burdens to the teachers and pupils, they themselves *are wilfully violating the wholesome regulations of the Board* designed to prevent this abuse." "They have been *wilful in violating the rules of the Board beyond all precedent*, for they have been warned of this fault, year after year, in the reports of the Superintendents, by special legislation of the Board, of which they have been duly notified, and more particularly by the Report of 1864." These, you must allow, Mr. Chairman, are strong words. "They *have been* wilfully violating the rules of the Board beyond all precedent." Now notice what the Superintendent considers to be his duty in case of any violations of the rules of the Board. In a circular to the schools, dated March 15th, 1867, after calling the attention of the Principals to certain by-laws of the Board, he says: "A rigid adherence to each of them will hereafter be strictly enforced, and *any violation, under any pretence whatever*, be reported to the Board."

So, then, we have had a state of things existing, in certain schools, which the Superintendent styles a wilful, not ignorant, not over-zealous, but *wilful* violation of the rules of the Board—



not an isolated case, but a continued series of wilful violations by a number of persons, going on through several years to the present time, and now cropping out to public notice through the statements of Assistants, corroborated by the Superintendents. Furthermore, this wilful violation must have been perpetrated by Principals, every one of whom has signed on the back of the pay-roll every month, for years, the following :

“ And we further certify, that we have duly reported herein each case of the violation, by any teacher in our respective departments included in the annexed pay-roll, of any of the rules and regulations of the Board of Education.”

Why, then, did not the Superintendent enforce the rules ? and why has he not long ago reported these wilful violators to the Board ? I am not quite sure that Mr. Frazier, from England, whose praise was quoted in so satisfactory a way the other evening, would have appeared so laudatory in the Parliamentary Blue-Book had he known this ; and it is quite as surprising a state of things to the most of the Principals as it would have been to Mr. Frazier.

It is, perhaps, impossible for my associate delegate and myself to speak for every Principal in the city in reply to any such charge made by the Assistants, and certified to in a great degree by the Superintendents. There are a few Principals in New York, I am glad to say they are very few, who neither speak for themselves nor permit others to speak for them. But I hold in my hand a statement signed by some thirty Male Grammar School Principals, which the delegates were instructed to present before your Committee, and which I will read :

“ The undersigned Principals of Male Grammar Schools in the city of New York do hereby deny that they have made improper promotions, or that they have wilfully violated any by-law of the Board of Education.”

Sir, the charge against us is so serious, so vital to the welfare of the schools, to the health of the teachers, and especially to the good of the pupils, that the Principals feel compelled to venture on a step which must commend itself to your sense of fitness.

Since, then, the Assistants make this charge, and since the Superintendents endorse the same, affirming that these wilful

violations of the rules of the Board have existed for a number of years, and *inasmuch as the Superintendents have not thought proper to make specific complaints against the violators of these laws*, the Principals request that, in justice to all concerned, a distinct specification of the particular schools where this state of things has existed be made, in order that the Principals so charged may be heard in reference to the same.

Indeed, sir, you will readily perceive that only in this way can such a charge be met. And if this view be correct, all further discussion of the manner of making promotions is utterly useless. Perhaps when such an investigation is ordered and undertaken, it may be discovered that the difficulty of making such promotions as would suit the Assistants has been greatly enhanced by the Assistants themselves. Perhaps, too, it will be found that the charge that the Principals are quite regardless of the opinions of the Assistants in making promotions, is one that lies equally strong against some of the Superintendents in making their promotions. But who is to superintend the Superintendents?

The Principals did not allow themselves to suppose, when they sent their delegates before your Committee, that the Superintendents would assent to every point taken. That would have been expecting too much from official human nature. But they had a right to expect that whatever was reasonable and fair in their objections would be met in a fair and candid way. Has the spirit with which we have been met been anything like this? Not even "a corpus delicti," "utterly frivolous objection," "general, vague and insufficient." Such are the kindly terms a gentleman uses in answer to the teachers. Is that the way, Mr. Chairman, to regard the statement of the great body of teachers, whose united views and experience must certainly have a weight *very nearly equal* to his own

Take, for example, the mode of dealing with the suggestion in reference to the term "miscellaneous words" in spelling throughout the grades. Every reasonable man must see that it was a very great oversight to introduce such an indeterminate word as this into so many grades without one word of explanation. Any candid man would have quietly admitted the objection, or have said, "Well, this is rather uncertain and

ought in some way to be explained." What does a gentleman say? "This very feature of excellence (thereby meaning the absence of definite requirements) some of the teachers desire to have *obliterated* (?), and a mere routine list of places in geography, and particular words in spelling, substituted." Then, alluding to my associate delegate by page, he adds: "I must say that I feel mortified that such a proposition should have emanated from so respectable a source." My associate stands by his geography, but he made no recommendation about spelling. The suggestion in that case was my own, and thus half the gentleman's mortification "about a respectable source" may be saved. Now, sir, this is a very contemptuous way of disposing of the suggestion. Besides, it is to many of us a very amusing way, when we know that there is a booklet of fourteen hundred test words used in the higher classes, which it is well understood will furnish a successful drill or "cram" for the Superintendent's examinations. Is it any more absurd to have fifteen hundred suitable words for the lower classes?

It was in the same spirit that they treated our objections to reviews of previous grades. I do not believe that there is a single member of your Committee who did not feel, that if our statements with reference to such reviews were correct, there ought to be some remedy, or at least modification.

On the question of reviews there is much confusion among the Superintendents. Mr. Randall says: "If any part of the Course is to be learned and never recalled again, then, I say, banish it from the Course at once, for it is proper for you never to study it or to learn it. If studies are not worth keeping in the mind, then they certainly are not worth anything at all." A few lines below this we find him saying: "Teachers are not held responsible for the studies in the lower grades; they are not held responsible for them at all; they are only held responsible for the class." A few lines farther on he changes his ground and says: "I regard it essential to the validity of any system of public instruction that *it* (?) should be reviewed, that *it* should be kept up, so that when our pupils leave our schools they shall be fully acquainted with *all* the previous studies." Once more, still farther on, he comes back to the class-work and reviews therein, showing a misunderstanding of the point clearly stated in the Principals' resolutions.

There is something of the same confusion, only a great deal more of it, on the part of the first Assistant Superintendent. This gentleman affirms "that there is nothing taught which it is not important to the pupil to remember—at any rate in all its essential particulars. Hence the reviews are to be reviews in outline." Thus, you will perceive that this gentleman does not agree with the Chief Superintendent, who asserts "that every pupil, when he leaves school, shall be fully acquainted with *all* his previous studies." The Assistant says it shall be a *review in outline*. And here comes up the vexed question of outline, which he pronounces so "utterly frivolous." What is a review in outline which retains "all its essential particulars?" But the confusion becomes infinitely worse when we find the Assistant explaining himself. On the 25th of May, 1868, he says: "It must not be forgotten that the schools are elementary, not high schools, and all that is taught *only* constitutes a foundation for future acquisitions. By no means can we justly consider any part as a scaffolding to be removed, since there is *nothing* taught which it is not important that the pupil should remember, at any rate in *all* its essential particulars."

On the 31st of December, 1866, scarce one year and a half ago, in his Annual Report—the most labored, perhaps, of all his reports—page 49, he says: "There is no doubt, however, that the consideration of practical usefulness in the knowledge presented should have increased weight as education advances; while, in the first steps, attention or development should be exclusively considered." In regard to this, it is properly remarked by Dr. Wilbur, of Syracuse, a very able scientific educator, "that in the early stages of education mental steps are by no means 'mental acquirements,' since in these, as in the higher stages, a thousand facts and ideas having been used as steps in the development process, *may be laid aside and forgotten*. For what a miserable affair a man would be if *he could remember* or *did remember* all the facts and ideas that helped in his growth towards manliness."

Now it appears to us, Mr. Chairman, that it would require a very powerful locomotive to draw these two statements into line. They are utterly contradictory "in all essential particulars;" and the teachers stand by the gentleman of the 31st of

December, 1866, as the unwilling "champion" of their views against his own of May, 1868. Had the teachers searched for authority for what they advanced, they could have found nothing stronger than those which the gentleman himself heartily endorsed scarcely one year and a half ago. These views go quite as far as we do, and are quite as strongly put as ours: "*A thousand facts and ideas having been used as steps in the development process, may be laid aside and forgotten. For what a miserable affair a man would be if he could remember or did remember all the facts and ideas that helped in his growth towards manliness.*"

Yet, sir, in direct connection with the argument of the teachers that they ought to be relieved from responsibility for certain studies in previous grades, because these could be safely "laid aside," the Superintendent said: "The moment you take away the system of reviews, that moment you strike at the *very foundation* of the system which we have adopted, and make it valueless." And the Assistant Superintendent says: "I should then write upon the system 'Ichabod,' for its fate would be sealed and its glory departed." Surely, in view of what has been shown, both gentlemen might have been a little less haughty in dealing with our argument. That argument stands unshaken, and now appears before you enforced by the Superintendents themselves.

As to reviews in the grade, there is no dispute; there can be no dispute. May I call your attention to the 10th page, Principals' Statement, for a full recognition of the advantage and necessity of these.

As pertinent to the marking system, and its effect on the teachers and the system, I wish to add a little to the outline, which I sketched in my last paper.

There are not a few persons, Mr. Chairman, who think that the great body of teachers are a professionally lazy set, who are only kept down to their work by fear of official visitation. In the Ward where I am situated, it happened a few years ago, that it became necessary to nominate a representative to your Honorable Board. Two names of highly respectable gentlemen were mentioned and discussed; and one of them, Mr. A., happened, unfortunately, to be characterized as a man that was friendly to the teachers. Up jumped Mr. Always Ready, and said that



"This was enough for him to know. If the gentleman was the teachers' friend, he should go for Mr. B. The Ward teachers all wanted stirrin' up, and he went for Mr. B., that would give 'em a good stirrin' up; they all needed it." So his views prevailed, and Mr. B. was nominated, and elected, to give us all a good "stirrin' up." But the gentleman himself must have been quite unconscious of what duty he was expected to perform, for he proved a kind officer enough, seeing us but seldom.

Now, sir, it is because there exists such a feeling in the community towards workers in general, that there is always very great latitude given to every vigilant supervising officer. It is pleasant for persons in trust to feel that there is some one settling their workmen down to their work. It is the work that is wanted, and a great deal is to be pardoned to the officer that obtains it. But to the workman himself it is manifestly important *how* it is obtained. The certainty of justice in the amount of work—the nature of the work—and of the way in which it is to be judged when finished—these questions are of prime moment to him. It is possible to get a good deal of work out of others without observing all these considerations, but it is not a wise method, and the more intelligent the workman the worse it is for him if we disregard them. So we may have celebrated schools, 90 $\frac{5}{8}$  per centers, 95 $\frac{3}{4}$  per centers, with high approval of functionaries from abroad, on flying and fleeting visits. Richter says, "in the island of Sumatra there is a kind of 'lightchafers,' large fire-flies, which people stick on spits, and illuminate the ways with at night. Persons of condition can thus travel with a pleasant radiance, which they much admire. Great honor to the fire-flies! But —, —."

So do I add, great honor to the 95 per centers, but — —.

Nothing can break the force of our statements in regard to the wretched anxiety produced on the minds of the teachers in their endeavors after these 95 $\frac{3}{4}$  or 100 per cent. marks. Every teacher knows our statements to be true. Yet one of the gentlemen on the other side expressed his "gratification at witnessing the Principals acting as generous champions, and speaking for their oppressed subordinates;" but took occasion to dull his praise, by publishing "that so intense an atmosphere of terror pervaded certain of their schools, that it was painful to examine

their classes, and impossible to obtain, at such times, the requisite information for his duties." This was said to blunt the force of what was affirmed in regard to the terror produced by the examination marks ; and was said, you will please notice, by the same gentleman who "prayed God that the noble lady, the Common School System, might escape unsullied from the hands of those who were exposing all her faults, however trivial, to the idle and scoffing gaze of the multitude." But certain Principals, both male and female, were to be struck, and in the improvement of such an opportunity, the noble lady was easily forgotten.

May I tell that gentleman, Mr. Chairman, that every man carries his own atmosphere with him, and particularly an examiner, when he enters a school-room for annual examination. If on the other hand, as passed recently under my own observation, an official examiner enter class-room after class-room with cordiality in his eye, and in every outline of his good humored face, and with an unsurpassed cheeriness of tone, at once puts every child at ease with a kindly greeting, the atmosphere such a man diffuses around him must be as genial as himself. In such a presence there can exist no atmosphere of terror. It would be dispelled before him as the mist before the sun. Most gratifying would it be, Mr. Chairman, to all concerned if such an example were well studied and imitated. So much for the "iron rule" of the Principals and "the atmosphere of terror" that hinders the Superintendent's work.

Something I ought to have added, had time permitted, on the tantalizing statement, theoretically true, but practically so false, as every Principal understands, that no injustice can be done because "there is always the right of appeal"—something on the terrible power to punish offenders that is lodged in the marking system, and how this "iron rule" is felt in the most subtle way in other things as well as studies. But time will not now permit.

Years ago this battle indeed was fought out ; and, as we all supposed, something was gained for the teachers. But the fruits of the struggle were lost to them by what appeared to many of us something like *bad faith*. *The agreement was not kept*. But even with all this, so patient have been the teachers, the discussion would not now have been renewed had your Board not ordered this inquiry.

Yet we are sure that out of these statements good must come. To abuses, if any, you will apply a remedy. For grievances you will find a cure. Do not fear that because this is done "Ichabod" will be written, or that the "very foundations" will be shaken. Do not believe that this system of Common Schools has been ruthlessly assailed, or that its true glory has been sullied by the inquiry before your Committee. That were to blame the Board of Education itself who ordered it. Its glory can only be dimmed when the discussion on one side assumes a faultless perfection for a few persons who claim to have it in their special keeping. If the Superintendents, as you have been told, have given to this system the best years of their lives—so too have we lived and labored for it. If they have had to fight for it—so too have we. Have they been honored in its success—so too have we. Its glory has been our glory as well as theirs; and when its honors and victories are recounted, we may well be pardoned if, with the veterans of the first Napoleon, there break from our lips the throbbing cry—"We, too, were of the Army of Italy." For this great Common School system is not the life of one man, nor of five men, but of many men and women. Nor in our dying shall it die. It has struck its roots deep in the popular heart. It will strike them deeper and deeper, as each generation moves on; and, in the far off future, I see thousands sitting under its wide-spreading branches partaking of its priceless fruit.

Mr. Chairman, this discussion has been made to assume the shape of the same old struggle between the exercise of nearly unlimited power on the one hand, and the governed on the other. It is a contest which, if it continue unsettled, will, by its very nature, be renewed at intervals by other men, before other Boards, when you and I shall have passed away. But the schools can never know any lasting concord until that time when the opinions of the teachers will be sought with kindness, and listened to with candor by those who may be Superintendents; and when an honest statement of grievances will cease to be regarded by them as a hostile act, or as a grievous impertinence only to be punished.

At the close of Mr. Scott's remarks, Mr. THOMAS HUNTER addressed the Committee, in reply to the Superintendents. Mr. Hunter said :

MR. CHAIRMAN, AND GENTLEMEN OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE :

The Superintendents, in their reply to the Principals and teachers, stated that we had attacked the system of Public Education in this city. This charge we utterly deny ; we utterly repudiate. We did not attack it ; we did not mean to attack it. But if the great system of Public Instruction, whose fame has justly extended throughout the civilized world, consists of a peculiar system of marking by numerals, then, indeed, we plead guilty ; for with a unanimity, almost unparalleled, we did condemn this marking system as the prime cause of all the overwork performed in the schools. We have yet to learn, however, that this wondrous system of grades and percentages constitutes the New York system of Public Education. We believe it to be but an excrescence on the grand old oak, retarding its growth and marring its beauty. It is unfair to accuse the teachers of attacking the system of Public Education. It is unjust. We condemned courteously but two things connected with the schools : the extent of the Course of Study and the evils arising from the present system of marking the classes. It is very bad logic to say that because we attacked a very small part we attacked the whole.

The great system of Public Education—broad, liberal and comprehensive generally, in its administration—is the pride of the teachers and the glory of the city. Jealously have we defended it ; unselfishly have we sustained it ; enthusiastically have we labored for it. When it was attacked two years ago *we* took no uncertain part ; *we* were not upon the fence, with one limb dangling over a Commission and the other over this Board,

“Happy to be with either were t’other dear charmer away.”

When those two noble champions of our magnificent system of Public Schools—James W. Gerard and James T. Brady—appeared at Steinway Hall to show good and sufficient cause why the present administration of the schools should not be disturbed, their vast audience was composed chiefly of teachers and their friends. That night “the schoolmaster was abroad ;” ay, and the schoolmistress, too. From the very beginning, even when a change

was impending, the teachers were with the Board heart and soul. No, gentlemen, we did not attack the system. We did not stab it; nor even shoot a Byronical arrow at it. The accusation was only a flight—a soaring, lofty, eagle flight of fancy.

The system of Education in this city is so vast and so excellent that no one man, were he a Colossus, could bestride it, and say, “It is mine, I made it.” If the credit were claimed for a man, we might tolerate it; but when it is claimed for a system of marking by numerals, neither gods nor men can stand it. The humblest teacher in a Primary Department has done her share of the good work; and my colleague on the right, with pale face and premature gray hair, has given also the best years of his life to the great cause of Education. Why, we have all labored, too hard it may be, to make the schools of New York what they are to-day. We have all devoted our lives to make our schools, like our city, the grandest in the Western World. For this we ask no especial credit. We are simply true and loyal to the system we love. But we do ask not be driven with “whip or spur;” for we humbly plead that we are *not* lazy, *not* unscrupulous in the discharge of our duties. We humbly protest that the “whip and spur” are out of date.

Mr. Chairman, the teachers of New York need neither “whip nor spur;” they need rather a bit and bridle; they need restraint more than coercion. They are zealous and high-spirited, and ought not be driven “like dumb cattle.” To say that they need a mark or a “spur” to impel them to do their work is not fair towards the noble army of teachers who have battled bravely for years against Ignorance. The opinion of the teachers—the estimate of their characters as indicated by the speech made here a few weeks ago is one not to be envied. But, nevertheless, we will venture to say that the teachers of this city work from a higher and a holier motive; that they labor from a conscientious sense of duty and right; and that they are impressed with the responsibility of their vocation, in training the future generation of American citizens. God help the teachers and their pupils, and God help the future, if the only motive that impels the New York teacher is the fear of the Superintendents’ marks.

The preamble and resolutions of the Honorable Board of Education called for our opinions. We entered no complaint. In obedience to your orders we came before you. We had no



right to refuse your summons. These very resolutions pre-supposed that you had some doubts as to the overworking of scholars and teachers. The press for weeks had teemed with complaints from parents and others. Calmly, dispassionately and without prejudice, we pointed out the evil effects of interminable reviews and of the marking system by numerals. Not a personal remark proceeded from the lips of a delegate,—save one from an assistant teacher against Principals. Why then have we been personally assailed? What evil had we done? what crime committed? We exposed two blemishes upon the system of examination. That was the “head and front of our offending.” Some of the evils were admitted, but shifted to the shoulders of the Principals. But our arguments were not answered; our statements were not disproved. Instead of logic, we received abuse; instead of reasoning, we heard feathery flights of fancy. Others of our statements were twisted. Not one of us condemned necessary reviews; yet it was made to appear that we were opposed to any reviews whatever. Not one of us but expressed our opinion in favor of examination; yet it was made to appear that we opposed all responsibility by examination. One of the Superintendents went even so far as to say, that, if our views were carried out, the office of Superintendent might be abolished. We asked only for a modification of the marking system; we did not desire to abandon examinations. We sought only a change in the Course of Study. Did these constitute an assault on the system of Public Education? You asked our opinions. Where was the crime of giving them truthfully and fearlessly? Would you ask us to be hypocrites and give false evidence?

The Chief Superintendent admitted the correctness of the allegations in the main; but in a fair argument, without passion or prejudice or personal spite, he sought to fasten the evil of overwork on the Principals. His speech was able; but, nevertheless, many of his premises were incorrect. For example: he stated that grades were of no account; that pupils might be kept nineteen years in the same grade; that the Superintendents alternated in their examinations; and many more of a like nature.

Now as regards the charges against Principals, it is very far from our intention to screen the offenders, or to condone the offence. If they have promoted unwisely or improperly, or if

they have overtasked their teachers by having two or three grades in one class, under one instructor, in order to have the honor of having a class of the First Grade, let them bear the responsibility, and let your Board deal with them as it sees fit. For myself, I simply deny the charge, and here is a paper, signed by thirty Principals, denying the allegation. A very tyro in the profession knows that without a careful and exact grading of the school there can be no success, and, instead of organization and progress, there will be confusion and difficulty. A great deal of trouble arises from the fact that teachers consider themselves as teachers of grades, and not of classes; and this erroneous and dangerous opinion springs from the method of marking grades by the Superintendents. But, for the sake of argument, let us suppose that the great discovery made by an assistant teacher is a genuine discovery, and not a mere myth or mirage. The question naturally arises, Why was not this discovery made by those especially employed to make it? Why was it left to an educational Columbus, near the Battery, to discover what took place in the large up-town schools, when he was blind to the fact that two grades were taught in the same class by the same teacher, just at his elbow? How did this assistant discover the motives of the Principals? How did he know that their motives were mercenary? Personally, I care nothing about this, for I have almost double the number required by law. But his broad—I was going to say brutal—insinuation was simply contemptible, and false upon the face of it; for the Superintendent promotes from the Primary Department, and it would not alter the Principal's salary one iota, if every boy of the five hundred were of the Seventh Grade of Grammar Schools. For what reason, then, does the Principal promote improperly, unwisely, or too rapidly, allowing, for the sake of argument, that he does so? Because, according to the method of marking by grades, as well as by percentages, the reputation of the school depends upon the grade of the highest class. This fact is undeniable. Every Principal knows it. If the grades of the classes had nothing to do with the standing of the school, and if the Principals were the *unprincipled* people they have been represented, they would be very foolish, indeed, to trouble themselves about promotions at all. If thorough scholarships in low grades were all that was

required to achieve success, why, it would take the "whip and spur" to drive them to promote their pupils. Just think what a perfect school—a model school—could be made by reducing the classes one, two, or, perhaps, three grades. Thorough proficiency in your present grade is all we ask; take nineteen years, if you like, to complete it. \* \* \* \* We do not believe, however, that improper promotions, to any injurious extent, have been made; but if they have, the same "whip and spur" that drove the class teachers, has driven these Principals to do an unwise thing, which the delegate Principals condemn as strongly as anybody.

And here permit me to say, once for all, that the over-working of the teachers implies and involves the over-working of the pupils. Grant that the former are over-worked, and it must be conceded that the latter are over-worked. A great deal has been said, too, *in a funny way*, of the healthy appearance of the teachers who have attended these meetings. But this is taking a part for a whole—a line of argument quite common of late. Four hundred are strong enough, after a hard day's work, to come to this Hall, and when here, present a fine and healthy appearance. Therefore, the other two thousand, who went home to rest, who had not, perhaps, the physical strength to come, are equally healthy and beautiful! Had we been politicians, sir, we could have selected two or three hundred of the sickly and pale, the hollow-eyed and consumptive, and set them here in sad array before you, and thus moved your generous hearts to pity, and brought the briny tears from eyes unused to weeping.

The marking system is the cause of all the trouble; the very fountain head of all our difficulties. Nearly every defect in the schools can be traced directly or indirectly to it. Improper promotions (if any), haste in teaching, anxiety, dread, and over-work flow from it. It creates an unwholesome rivalry, which has a tendency to demoralize. It pits teacher against teacher, like a pair of race-horses, impelled by "whip and spur." It arrays school against school, principal against principal, ward against ward, district against district. It has engendered a sectional feeling as to localities in the school system, which at times has endangered its efficiency, and which some of the members of your Honorable Board have deeply deplored.

But this marking system, to be good for anything, must rest upon a foundation of simple and uniform justice,—a fact which its most ardent admirers cannot deny. Remove justice from under it, and the whole edifice topples over. Man does not possess the quality of justice at all times, and under all circumstances. It is an attribute of the Deity alone. The best of men are swayed, at times, by their passions and prejudices; and, at such times, they cannot be just, even if they tried. For this reason, even a Judge on the bench is not permitted to control the life or death of the meanest murderer. The criminal is tried by twelve men—a jury of his peers—and they alone have the power to declare his guilt or innocence. The reputation of a teacher is a very serious matter—almost a question of life or death—and no one man should possess the power to decide whether that teacher is worthy or unworthy. Your Board does not permit five trustees, elected by the people, to exercise this great power. You have very properly thrown safe-guards around the teacher. The genius of republican institutions is against this one-man power.

As one of the assistants very strongly expressed it, “These marks are boldly used as a weapon to harass and annoy the teacher.” Only the other day a teacher was degraded from her position because her class took only 97 per cent! Only 97 per cent!! Why this is an extraordinary mark. The wonder is, how she could attain it at all; and yet she was reduced in rank. What remedy has this poor young lady? How is this wrong to be redressed? Were there no marking system by numerals, this teacher could not have suffered such degradation.

If the examiner cannot be uniformly just, it must be conceded that the marking system is oppressive and injurious. One class is examined at 9 o’clock, when the pupils and Superintendent are fresh and vigorous; another is examined at  $3\frac{1}{2}$  or 4 o’clock, when both are wearied and exhausted. It is against reason to suppose that both these classes of the same grade can acquit themselves alike. The one examined in the morning will take 3, 4, or 5 per cent., at least, more than the one examined in the afternoon, and the teacher of the latter class may be degraded in consequence. Classes of the same grade do not receive the same questions; therefore there should be no comparisons between them; but in-

vidious *comparisons are made*. Two classes of the same grade are examined by different Superintendents ; therefore there can be no fair comparisons ; but, nevertheless, *comparisons are made*. Two classes of the same grade are examined, one of them in five studies of the grade, and the other in seven ; therefore there can be no fair comparisons ; yet *comparisons are made*. If ten pupils are examined in reading, in one class, and thirty in another class of the same grade, there can be no just comparisons in reading ; still we know that *comparisons are made*. Why, it is amusing to see some trustees, in some parts of the city, travel around from school to school, exhibiting these marks, as if they were infallible decrees of Omniscience, and saying, "Why, Miss Smith has taken 100 per cent., and Miss Jones only 97½ per cent." As if any class could, by any possibility, take 100 per cent. And see, Mr. Chairman, what all this leads to. It is a pitiable sight to behold teachers running around, enquiring from their neighbors, "What kind of examples are given out this year ? What sort of questions do the Superintendents ask ?" and, having ascertained, to behold them proceed accordingly *to prepare for examination*. One teacher ascertains certain facts as to "methods of instruction" and examination—not necessarily the best "methods of instruction"—and another teacher fails to do so. The class of the former will assuredly pass a better examination ; for it has been especially "crammed" to meet a certain demand. Yet the teacher of the latter class may be in every way the superior instructor of the two. Suppose, again, that one class of Principals and teachers support the marking system, and another class are opposed to it. Is it in human nature, no matter how muchsoever he may try to be just, for the Superintendent to view these two classes of Principals and teachers with the same impartial mind ? To do so would be, in the estimation of most people, morally impossible. Do not all men love their own disciples ? Do they not love their own system and their own ideas, and think well of those who agree with them ? And, sir, in this connection, it may be as well to state the fact that there is a feeling among some teachers, that honest difference of opinion in school matters will not be tolerated ; that independence of thought in relation to "methods of instruction" may be productive of very serious consequences ; and, that the high road to favor is to echo



the sentiments of other people. If this be so, it is high time it was put an end to; for any such system is un-American, illiberal, unwise and unjust.

But, Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen, it would test this whole matter in dispute, if you would print the following five questions:

1. Are the teachers and pupils overworked?
2. What is your opinion of reviews and responsibility for lower grades?
3. Is there just enough, or too much, or too little, in the present grade of study?
4. What is your opinion of the present marking system?
5. What causes the overwork, if any?

And then require every teacher connected with the system of Public Education, privately and confidentially, without the fear of exposure, to answer them as briefly as possible. You may rest satisfied that nine out of ten would tell you that the teachers and pupils are overworked; that interminable reviews and responsibility for lower grades are unjust and oppressive; that the Course of Study demands too much work at one and the same time; and that the Superintendents' method of marking, by numerals, is injurious to the teacher, to the pupil, and the cause of Education. But, it might be said again, that the teachers are "interested" in this matter; that it is for their "interest" to lighten their labors and shorten the hours of work; and that, therefore, their opinions are worthless. But one of the Superintendents says, that the teachers and pupils are overworked. He admits the fact, but shifts the responsibility. Another says they are not; that instead of being overworked, they need a "spur." Which is right? There is evident contradiction here. It is for you, gentlemen, to judge between them.

One of the Superintendents charged one of the delegates with changing his views on the marking system. That delegate is proud to confess that that charge is true. He has changed his views, and has had good reasons for so doing. But this is not the time or place to explain them. Where is the crime in being

open to conviction? What man among us has not changed his opinion at some time during his life? He who never alters his views of men and things is either infallible or, at some time, stubbornly consistent in error. During the last six or seven years, some of the ablest minds in the country have changed their views on different questions of policy, finance, and government. A change of view needs no defence. So this charge is dismissed as frivolous and irrelevant.

While we have not accused the Superintendents of deliberate unfairness, they have accused us of wilful violation of the By-Laws of the Board. But more of that hereafter. Let us suppose that a Superintendent, being but a man, should find it to his "interest" to mark schools and classes low. Suppose he should do a deliberate act of injustice. What remedy have we? None whatever. The Superintendent says, we may appeal to the Board of Education; but what good will that do? How is the Board to ascertain the truth in this matter? Order another examination? Utterly useless. Does not every teacher know that it is in the power of any examiner to make any class—even the best—utterly fail in all its studies? And yet you could not lay your finger upon the first tangible act that would form even the groundwork of an appeal. Any of us, if so inclined, could break down the best class in the city so that it would not be entitled to even 64 per cent.; and we could do this in such a manner that the most acute instructor or lawyer in the country could not pick a flaw in our examination. All the Superintendent has to do is to commence to find out what the class does not know—a very easy matter at all times—and follow this up. He may even assume a great show of leniency, give ample time, change the subjects, and give a little assistance here and there; and still the result would be the same. I say the Superintendent possesses, under the present marking system, the power, if he chooses to exercise it, to break down any class at any time, and can utterly defy detection. This is a fearful power to commit into the hands of any one man. There is no appeal from it; its decision is irreversible. You can prove nothing. None of us have charged injustice, with intent, in the examinations of the schools. On the contrary, we have borne general testimony to the fairness of these annual examinations. But, nevertheless,

the absolute power is given to one man to destroy the reputations of as many teachers as he sees fit.

It seems that between the Superintendents and the assistant teachers the Principal of the school is a sort of supernumerary, or figure-head, or head policeman. He is not to decide as to the methods of instruction: that work is done by others. He is not to promote from the Primary: another performs that office for him. He is not to promote into the Supplementary Grade: from that, too, he is kindly relieved. He is not to promote from class to class without first asking permission from the assistant teachers. As one assistant teacher remarked (so I was informed), "the Superintendent wanted one thing and the Principal another, so he did what the Superintendent desired." By and by the assistants will claim the right to admit and suspend pupils; to whip, (I believe some of them have asked that already,) in their respective classes. There is one thing certain, that if many more of the functions of a Principal are withdrawn or transferred, there will be very little danger of his being worked to death.

On the subject of "Outlines" and "Interminable Reviews" I have nothing new to add. I have left this to my colleague, in whose ability the Principals and teachers have perfect reliance. But I may be pardoned if I return for a moment to the studies of history and grammar. This I do with great reluctance, and only in the way of self-defence. It seems that one of the Superintendents traveled out of the direct line of legitimate argument to make a personal attack upon one of the delegates, his teachers, and the school over which he has the honor to preside.

*Why he did so, or why he was so solicitous and sore upon the subject of analysis, is best known to himself.* Any impartial and unbiased mind who reads that delegate's remarks upon this subject cannot fail to see that there has been a wilful perversion of the whole spirit and tenor of what was said before your Committee. The object aimed at was simply to show that there was "too much theory and too little practice, too much analysis and parsing and too little writing of composition." This the Superintendent did not deny or disprove. The theory of grammar has been the demand of the Superintendent, and the teachers have endeavored to supply this demand. If we except

the recent slate work in the lower classes, there has been no demand for composition in the annual examinations ; and the correction of false syntax has been rarely called for. Hence, the marking system as to the theory of grammar, (that is, to analysis and parsing), prevented the giving of sufficient time to the practical part of grammar (that is, to the correction of false syntax and the writing of composition). Boys pick up inaccuracies of expression in the streets, which every parent knows to be a fact. The theory of grammar, as required by the Superintendent, has no influence in correcting these bad habits of speech. Parents and teachers must correct them while the pupils are young, or else they will cling to them through life. I repeat and maintain that sufficient time has not, and cannot, under the present requirements, be given to the practical part of grammar. Instead of disproving the statement, the Superintendent endeavored to cast odium upon the delegate, his school and his teachers. A very poor argument indeed ! But what will be thought of his attack when it is distinctly and emphatically declared that the Superintendent's own record of the examinations in the school in question, for many years, averaged "excellent." Whoever doubts this has only to examine the public minute book of the school. The Principal of that school further declares that he has taken particular pains, even going so far as to steal the time from the class teachers, to teach composition and to correct false syntax. The requirements of the Superintendent demand that the scholars shall take sentences apart ; not that they shall put words together to make sentences, or sentences together to make paragraphs. What was advocated was both fair and just—that grammar should be used to correct the inaccuracies, slang and vulgarisms of the street ; and that a boy should be required to be able to write, in proper English, a simple letter before he leaves the highest class in the Public Schools.

As to history, there is very little to be said, except that in the school assailed, special efforts have been made to teach it as a living body, and not as a "dry skeleton." The method of examination necessitated the study of "bald dates and barren facts." History is said to be philosophy teaching by example. If the history taught in our schools be such as to make boys grow up better and more intelligent citizens ; such as to cause them to

understand the growth of a nation, the reasons for its decline or fall, it would be well to have it explained ; for the present speaker frankly confesses that he cannot discover it. And he thinks, further, that a great many others are in the same predicament. Every body knows that the Superintendents' examinations have called for the day, the month and the year ; for the numbers engaged in battle, and the lists of killed and wounded. As for the "methods of instruction" pursued by the teachers and the Principal referred to, they have given satisfaction to thousands of the most intelligent people in this city. The fact is, if the statement may be pardoned on account of the source from which it emanates, the "school considered by some the best in the city" (to quote the Superintendent's own remarks) *needs no defence*. So the sneer about the Freshman Class is dismissed as frivolous and unworthy of notice.

The statements made by the Superintendents against the Principals do not prove that the following changes are not needed—changes requested with great unanimity by all classes of teachers in the Grammar Schools :

1. From unnecessary to necessary reviews.
2. From unnecessary to necessary responsibility for lower grades.
3. A change in the method of marking the classes by grade numbers and percentages.

To prevent all possible doubt as to our meaning, and to prevent the opportunity to twist our statements and recommendations respectfully submitted to your Committee, we hereby distinctly avow that we favor most decidedly—

1. Proper and needful reviews.
2. Proper and needful responsibility for lower grades.
3. Thorough examination and supervision of all the classes and schools.

Instead of fearing these examinations, the present speaker has hitherto rather liked them. They have been no "terror" to him. So the surgeon's knife may be made as keen as those minds described by Butler, that "can split hairs 'twixt the north and



north-west sides," and he will submit, with all due submission, to be punctured or flayed at the pleasure of the operator.

But, sir, much against his will, and after two or three times declining to serve as a delegate, the present speaker came here to represent the views of others, and to enforce them to the best of his ability. Therefore, he would recommend to the Joint Committee, and through your Committee, to the Board of Education,—

1. Such a change in the First Grade of Grammar Schools as will enable the smaller schools to prepare boys for the Introductory Class of the College.

2. The modification of the method of examination to this extent only: that no class shall be estimated and measured, and no teacher's reputation fixed by an examination of the studies of the lower grades,—leaving, however, to the Superintendent full power to ascertain if the proper and needful reviews have been accomplished.

3. That the publicity hitherto given to the Superintendents' marks should cease; that in lieu of numerals, but two adjectives be used—*satisfactory* and *unsatisfactory*; that for their own private use, as well as for the use of the Boards of Trustees, and the Board of Education, the Superintendents can keep whatever records they please: provided these records are not used to pit class against class and school against school in rancorous rivalry.

Mr. Chairman, the Principals have been accused of violating the regulations of the Board; of making hasty and improper promotions, to the no small injury of the system of Public Education. The question naturally arises, Did the Assistant Superintendent himself obey the regulations of this Board? Did he "do as the regulations of the Board provide"? To my no little amazement, I have discovered since this discussion commenced, that one of the grievances complained of by the teachers was removed in December, 1859, by resolution of your Honorable Board. I was not aware of this fact until it was recently pointed out to me. I entertained an idea for years, that a sort of compromise had been effected between certain parties; but

had no knowledge of the fact, that after long and due deliberation by such men as Erastus C. Benedict, Dr. Ranney, and Dr. Eager, (than whom abler men have never graced the councils of Education,) this dispute or difficulty was settled by resolution. It does not mend the matter that teachers, (myself among the number,) requested these marks and placed them on the Minute Book. But let us read the report, and the decision from the Minutes of the Board of Education :

At a stated meeting of the Board of Education, held Sept. 21, 1859 :

“ The President laid before the Board a communication from Geo. W. Cooper, John G. McNary, Thos. Foulke, and twenty-one other Principals of the schools, (Thos. F. Harrison among the number,) representing the system of marking the schools, pursued by the City Superintendent, as productive of the most serious injustice to the teachers, and of the greatest injury to the pupils, and asking permission of the Board of Education to be heard on the subject in such a manner as the Board may designate.

Mr. WHITE moved to refer said communication to the Committee on Course of Study and Books.

Mr. GREEN moved that the subject be laid on the table until the next stated meeting of the Board.

On motion of Mr. BENEDICT, *Ordered* : That said communication be referred to the Committee on Course of Studies and School Books, and that the Superintendent be requested to furnish to this Board, at its next meeting, a statement of his system of examination and marking, and of his views on the subject, and that such communication of the City Superintendent be referred to said Committee.       \*       \*       \*

At a stated meeting, held Dec. 28th, 1859 :

Mr. RANNEY presented the following Report from the Committee on Course of Studies and School Books :

TO THE HON. THE BOARD OF EDUCATION :

The Committee on Course of Studies, to which was referred, by a Resolution of your Board, September 21, the Memorial of twenty-five Principals of Grammar Schools, on the Marking System of the Superintendent, respectfully report : That they have carefully considered the communication, as well as the answer of the Superintendent, and the reply of the Teachers, all

of which were in writing; that they have at different times heard the discussion of these papers by the Superintendent on the one hand, and the Principals on the other, and as a result of these discussions, they advised a mutual conference on the part of these gentlemen. The conference thus recommended has terminated in a mutual adjustment of the points in dispute, on the following grounds: 1st. That the system of numerals, considered so objectionable by many of the teachers, as to amount, in their opinion, to injustice, shall be abolished; and 2d. That the record of the Superintendent's examination shall be entered on the Public Minute Book of each school or department, in plain words, stating the Superintendent's estimate of the character and progress of each class.

Your Committee feel gratified at the harmony with which this arrangement has been reached; and hereby express it as their opinion that the true interests of the schools will be greatly promoted by this adjustment. While it leaves the Superintendent to pursue his examinations with whatever thoroughness he may please, it does away with the opportunity of serious complaint against the way in which these have been recorded, and still permits the school officers to obtain whatever information the Superintendent's examination furnishes them, in the management of their schools and teachers.

In view of the harmonious adjustment of this point in dispute, the Committee beg leave to be discharged from its further consideration.

|                 |                   |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| L. RANNEY,      | } Committee on    |
| WM. BLOOMFIELD, |                   |
| WM. EAGER,      |                   |
| E. C. BENEDICT, |                   |
|                 | Course of Studies |
|                 | and Books.        |

*On motion, Ordered: That the Report be received and placed on file, and that the recommendations of the Committee be, and they are hereby ADOPTED.*

This "harmonious adjustment," which was "to promote the best interest of the schools," became a Regulation of your Honorable Board, binding on the Superintendent until repealed. *It has not been repealed; and on the Public Minute Books of the schools the classes have been marked by numerals.* \* \* \*

Mr. Chairman, before concluding, I beg to suggest that the Preamble and Resolutions call for the opinion of one who has had very great experience in the school system, having been connected with it thirteen years, as Trustee, Commissioner and Clerk, and who has often interposed to save the teachers from

some of the evils alluded to :—I mean Mr. Thomas Boése, the Clerk of the Board of Education ;—and I trust that before any action is taken by your Honorable Committee on a question of so great importance, you will avail yourselves of his intimate and comprehensive knowledge of the whole system of Public Education in this City.

Miss MARY A. SIMMS then rose to reply on behalf of the Female Principals to the argument of the Superintendents, and spoke as follows :

MR. CHAIRMAN, AND GENTLEMEN OF THE COMMITTEE :

When, in accordance with your request, we came here as representatives of the Female Principals, we understood that it was for the purpose of stating our views with reference to the Course of Study—not its administration—and we therefore confined ourselves to the Course of Study, deviating from it only to say that we had no complaint to make of the examination by the Superintendents. Therefore, the charge that we have attacked the administration of the Superintendents, you will concede to be without foundation.

With regard to the Course of Study, it needs very little argument to prove that if the rules governing its acquisition—particularly with regard to the *time* required for its completion—be *not* strictly followed, that Course must be very oppressive. But, if any teacher has been required by her Principal to perform a certain amount of work in *less* than the minimum time prescribed by your laws, she has always had a remedy in an appeal to your Board ; she has also been protected by a law which says that “it shall be the duty of the City Superintendent and his Assistants, at each visitation of a school or department, to inquire specially whether the provisions relating to the Course of Study have been strictly followed ; and the City Superintendent shall, without delay, report the case of any violation of the same to the Board, stating the name of the Principal of the school and the teacher of the class concerned in such violation.” That law is supposed to be still in existence—although it does not appear in the Manual for this year—and it would seem to furnish an effectual preventive for the evil in question ; but if there are any Principals who have violated your laws, and who have succeeded in evading the vigilance of the Superintendents, and in

“cowering” their assistants into silence, it is your duty to find them out; we do not wish to screen such offenders in any way.

The question under consideration, as we understand it, is this: “Is the Course of Study too severe in its requirements, provided that the laws governing its acquisition be strictly followed?” We think that it is too severe, chiefly in regard to *two* grades—the First Grammar School and the higher Supplementary Grade, and that it is so from the three causes mentioned in our report. We do not join in the sweeping assertion that the Course of Study is too severe throughout, and I think it no mean compliment to a system of such magnitude, to say that its most experienced teachers can find in it only *three* objectionable features. The first of these—“the indefiniteness of the prescribed Course”—has been met by the promise of an explanatory manual; concerning our second objection—“the continuous review”—we have nothing to add to the arguments that have been presented, except that we would reiterate them if called upon to do so.

Allow me here to correct an error in the printed report (page 36) concerning the subject of Geography in the First Grammar School Grade; our recommendation was “that Local Geography be completed in the Second Grade, and that *Physical* Geography only be required in the First Grade, as it affords an intelligent view of the whole subject, that would be quite sufficient for all practical purposes.”

Our last objection—“that too many studies are required at one time”—has been noticed in two ways. The City Superintendent says that we have no cause to complain of the number of studies, since we may take all the time we think necessary to complete them; in support of this opinion he quotes the first part of a sentence from our Report, running thus: “We are not obliged by the Board of Education to take up all these subjects at once; we are not obliged to complete the Course within any given period; we may take all the time we think necessary,” and so on. As the remainder of that sentence which the gentleman omitted contains the conclusion of the whole matter, I will ask your attention to it once more—“*But, whether two or five years be taken, an unhealthy strain upon the energies of teachers and pupils must come in the last year, when it becomes necessary to review all the subjects above mentioned, in order to be ready for*



*the examination.*" "The subjects above mentioned" are all the studies in both grades of the Supplementary Course, with *four* from the Grammar School Course, for all which we understood that our pupils were responsible at the examination for graduation.

I am happy to see, however, that this objection has been met in another way, which really affords us some hope of relief. The Assistant Superintendent who addressed you at the last meeting, assured you that "the Superintendents had never dreamed of requiring all these studies at one examination," and that we had been laboring under a misapprehension when we supposed that they would do so. If we have been so mistaken, we are very glad to know it, and on behalf of the Principals and Vice-Principals, I thank the gentleman for informing us of the fact.

If you, gentlemen, will review the reasons stated by him with regard to the origin of this "misapprehension," in connection with § 86, page 124 of the Manual, you will, doubtless, agree with him that the misapprehension *was* a very natural one. But will he not go a little farther and tell us *which* of these studies are to be required at the examination for graduation?

The gentleman refers to his Report for 1867 (page 30), where he says that "the usual requirements have embraced only *eight* studies." I see *nine* studies on that page, exclusive of Penmanship, as Orthography is mentioned farther down, in addition to the *eight* studies first enumerated. We would like to know if our pupils are to be responsible at their final examination for these eight (or nine) subjects *only*, or, in other words, are they to be responsible only for the studies prescribed in the Manual for the higher grade of the Supplementary Course?

If this is what the gentleman means, I might go beyond the Principals and Vice-Principals and thank him in the name of *all* the teachers, as he has taken the first step toward the end that we all desire—that each teacher should be held responsible only for her own work.

Gentlemen, having thus briefly presented to you the views of my associates, I leave it for you to decide whether they are, or are not, worthy of consideration.

Miss ELIZABETH LOVERIDGE then addressed the Committee on

behalf of the Female Grammar School Assistant Teachers as follows :

MR. CHAIRMAN, AND GENTLEMEN OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE :

If the discussions made before you upon the subject of your investigations are to be of service in leading you to a true appreciation of all the affecting circumstances, and, therefore, in enabling you to recommend such action as shall effectually cure and prevent the abuses and burdens that mar the completeness and efficiency of our school system, and oppress both the children who receive and the teachers who administer its advantages, they can be only truly so after they shall have been free and impartial. We are not of those who harbor the fear that a complete inquiry is to endanger the permanence or stability of our great public blessing, or, that the revelation of its defects will result otherwise than in their correction, thus purifying and developing that sacred trust, to the wise administration of which the citizens of a true Republic must look for the security of their State. The ideas of the school and of the people are too dependent upon each other, for the prosperity and peace of the one to be possible without the establishment and success of the other. We are, therefore, glad that not only has the opportunity been offered for the candid expression of our views and experiences upon this great subject, but that a further opportunity is afforded for their stronger enforcement and for their vindication from such reflections as have been cast, as are in themselves disingenuous and perverting, but which, in the event of their being allowed to pass unnoticed, could not fail to place our previous statements in a false and ungenerous light.

Nor shall we be too hasty in lamenting that the "many others interested in the Cause of Education as well as the parents," referred to in the resolution of the Board authorizing this investigation, and in an address delivered before you, have not made themselves heard on these occasions, with their "disinterested evidence." We incline to believe that an invitation publicly extended to such would result in voluminous and specific testimony with regard to the abuse referred to in the resolution, and, if desired, in the indication of the offenders. We do not believe, however, that this last object was at all contemplated when your Honorable Committee was instituted, and, in that sense, we have

labored to display to you rather the general grievance than the individual sinner.

And now, sir, to the argument. But first, we have been called upon for our credentials, and that by a party whom we can scarcely consider as the proper judge of the admissibility of evidence here, but for whose own purpose, and possibly for other interests, it has appeared useful to attempt to shock and damage the authority and reliability of our testimony. For the purpose, however, of satisfying these objections, now that they have been made, we desire to explain the manner in which general notice was endeavored to be given of the meeting called to respond to your invitation, the representation there present, and the harmony with which the subject resolutions of our last address were adopted. Two distinct sets of notices were sent to the assistants of all the Female Grammar Departments of our city; one of which went to the care of the respective Principals, who were requested to notify their subordinates. The other was in printed form, addressed directly to the assistants of the different schools, and deposited in the United States Mail. These were from two different sources; both, however, calling a meeting to be held at the same place and time. At this meeting twenty-five of the Departments were represented, not by the whole corps of teachers employed in each, but by delegates who acted for the others. It will appear, therefore, that the number of assistants in attendance represented a much larger proportion of our colleagues than you have been given to understand have been heard through us at these hearings. The resolutions embraced in our last address were offered singly for discussion, and were all favored by the general opinion of those present. It is a fact that against some of them objection was at first made, upon the ground that they reflected upon our superiors, and that a wise policy required that we should carefully avoid all issues with those in authority over us. Also, because one of them (that relating to the percentage) did not appear to some of those present to reflect their own views. But we desire distinctly to state that not a single negative voice was recorded against them upon their final adoption. And, had this not been so, we have yet to learn that the expression of a majority of any assemblage is not to be accepted as its general sense. Of the truth of the above

statements, we are prepared to furnish the certificates of those who issued the calls and of the presiding officer of the occasion. It will, therefore, be seen that every reasonable means was taken to call this meeting ; and if, as has been averred, a number of teachers failed to receive the notice which was in one instance mailed to them, and in another entrusted to Principals for delivery, the explanation can possibly be found in the same reasons which explain why it was that some of the assistants never received the first intimation that their opinions were desired through delegates at this inquiry, although, doubtless, your Committee took all the measures that were considered necessary in order that the teachers might, every one of them, be so informed.

But, sir, is that to invalidate your proceedings? And, if not, we ask whether the same reason of a kind is to be allowed to discredit the views we have before presented, not in the spirit of exaggeration and overstatement, but with a sincere wish, temperately and conscientiously, but firmly, to meet your request? We think not.

Nor do we think this covered approach to our citadel any more formidable than that other demonstration, made as a *divertissement*, which would convince you that we are a legion of hired and lazy soldiers, disputing under the banners of self-interest, and unwilling or unable to strike a blow in the name of the universal good. The records which have been here adduced (p. 104) will show what we have accomplished in the face of disheartening difficulties; and it is ill-becoming to cast such an imputation upon those who have fought so good a fight. We are, at least, willing to accord to the others who have here addressed you, the same good motives which we claim for ourselves.

We are not willing, however, that our opinions should be lightly received or discarded. The clinic affords the best opportunity for the study of operative surgery, and a month there spent is worth six passed in committing the principles of books. And so in every work, a little practice is worth more than a great deal of theory. We come before you as having been your practical workmen, able to suggest where the bearings of the machinery are not true and where the brakes are out of order.

But we are loth to believe that the gentleman himself can accept our statements with the same misgivings that he would surround them with ; for, when they suit the argument, these are readily availed of as a defence, behind which the whole Board of Education, and the Superintendents with their Course of Studies, can take safe refuge. Thus, after testifying that the fault could not possibly lie in the Course of Studies, which, to his certain knowledge, was more reasonable and less exacting than any other Course which had previously been in use, and satisfying himself that the By-Laws of your Board did not allow any undue rigor to be enforced upon the teachers and scholars, and that, therefore, as far as it and he were concerned, they were not *particeps criminis*, he fortifies himself (p. 125) behind this barrier, and finds in its materials a ready explanation of the whole of the difficulty. He also confirms himself in this position by the Report of the Committee of 1864, which indicates the present troubles as in existence at that time.

We hope, sir, that no such defence will be needed, or possible, after the Committee of 1868 shall have completed their labors. But, on the very next pages (126, 127, 128) he devotes himself to an impeachment of this testimony, after it had seemed to have accomplished its purpose, and after he (p. 121, l. 6, p. 123, l. 34, p. 125, l. 15) and his worthy superior (p. 113, l. 36) had borne direct evidence to its truth from their own experience. And the Assistants are very summarily demolished. When, however, remembering that there still remain the Principals to be disposed of, the rejected weapons, which we had most conveniently furnished, are again eagerly grasped and wielded (p. 129) with sensible effect. This appears to us about as reasonable as it would be to tear down a building that stood in the way of a desired view, then to build it up again for the convenience of occupation, but, upon accidentally straying out of it, and remarking what an unsightly interference it was, to destroy it again because it concealed the coveted picture. But the facts are too bald to be easily suppressed at pleasure. They are within the knowledge of many of your assistant teachers, and avowedly within the experience of your Superintendents.

But these gentlemen tell you that the laws which have already been enacted are ample to apply to these difficulties, and that it



is only when they are broken that these arise. It might be pertinent to ask whether the Board of Education has any officer or officers appointed, whose business it is to see that its regulations are enforced, and their healthful objects secured? The Superintendents, evidently, do not consider it a part of their duty, as they have told you that every trouble complained of is attributable to an infringement or mal-administration of law, and that they are familiar with many of these instances. It must needs be, therefore, that they cannot be implicated in the present irregularities, for that is opposed to their universally conceded fidelity. Who, then, is to see that these laws, enacted for the purpose of preventing these abuses, and adequate, it is asserted, to this object, shall be thoroughly administered? Are the Assistants to be encouraged to report infringements, and, if so, to whom? Your Assistant Superintendent has told you that it is "no light matter for these to make a simple statement of facts," and this in cases merely of an unwise or harsh exercise of a legally allowed authority. Would it be a lighter matter to report an infringement of the law? The records, Mr. Chairman, which have been so thoroughly searched for a supply of statements, would, undoubtedly, show numerous instances where your enactments have been overridden, and it would have been well, perhaps, for those who have been engaged in the dusty work of unearthing them, to have completed their rumagings, and added these circumstances to their lists of more certainly ascertained facts.

And just here, if I may be permitted to assume my individual character, I am afforded a good opportunity to make a remark for your further and more reliable information, in connection with the statements of the gentleman (Mr. Harrison) who has this evening most unequivocally denied my positive declaration that more than one hundred children are frequently placed in a single class. I hold in my hand a paper, which has just been handed me, and which has been furnished without the use of "leading interrogatories," or even a simple request, to obtain it. It comes from the small circle about me, and contains the names of two assistant teachers who have this day under their charge a greater number of scholars than one hundred, and of three others who have had a similar experience within a recent date.

Notwithstanding the opinions of your Superintendents, which have been expressed to the contrary, we may, perhaps, be allowed to question the entire wisdom of the Course of Studies, and of the regulations of your Board. In the examination of the subject, we shall have a very few thoughts to offer. It has been asserted that there is nothing onerous in the Course of Studies, which merely prescribes the order of work, and not the amount which shall be accomplished within a given time. It has further been shown that your rules allow the Principals to separate this Course, its divisions and allotment being left entirely to their own judgment, it only being required that certain grades shall not be accomplished in less than a certain time, and that as much time as shall be needed above the minimum may be occupied in teaching any part of the Course. It has also been admitted by your Superintendents, that too much work is oftentimes required by the Principals, who mark out the fields to be gone over by their subordinates. From these conditions, it appears to us that but one single conclusion can be arrived at, viz. : that your regulations are at fault in not requiring that a longer period of time shall be appropriated to the several fields of study, than is at present allowed as a minimum, and further, that your laws, in allowing the latitude referred to, and which is independently and injudiciously used, oftentimes, to oppress and overburden the teachers and children, are not calculated effectually to prevent this unfortunate result. And yet your Assistant Superintendent (p. 136) gives it as his conviction, that "if any error at all has been committed, it is in EXCESSIVE restrictions upon the discretionary authority of the Principals." How nearly this harmonizes with the other expressed views, as to the evils wrought under this authority, even as at present limited, I leave you to consider.

There are other subjects upon which it seems necessary that more light should be thrown. We would not have you suppose that we have petitioned for the abolition of examinations and reviews. If our last remarks be carefully read, it will be seen that we do not reflect upon the value of these means for the purpose of sustaining the scholarship of our classes, or for the object of ascertaining how well and faithfully the duties of your servants have been performed. It will be seen that we ask

that they be made efficient and valuable (p. 83), protesting, however, against such features of the present plan as work an injustice to teachers and scholars. We do not object, by any means, that the inefficiency of a class in an inferior grade, from which it was too prematurely advanced, should be made apparent. We ask that the teacher under whose care the deficient are placed shall not herself be held responsible for this ignorance of studies which it has been principally the duties of others to teach. Nor would we argue that a fault is not indicated in any such deficiency that might be revealed. Do not, however, charge it to the account of the teacher, who has unfortunately been obliged to work with such poor material, but rather to the direct authority by which the promotions were made, and the pupil declared fitted for this progress. If old *Æsop's* dog, who has been introduced to you, gets among the flock to lacerate and destroy, we do not demand that he shall be "muzzled." But we will encourage and aid him if he will pursue and overcome the wolf.

It is an easy disposition of a statement to say that it is "overwrought," "too highly colored," too general and sweeping in its application." We only reply, that, as you approached us in the sincere spirit of inquiry, we have met you with a pure desire to give such information as came within our own or our colleagues' experience, in illustration of the resolutions which we were appointed to sustain. In doing this, we have especially guarded against making individual references, or giving to certain of our views a wider scope than they deserved. You will observe (p. 85) our explanations, that some of our remarks were intended for a limited application, urging that if they held in a single instance, as will most assuredly be allowed they do, it was a proper subject for our presentation and your action. And, certainly, if more weight be needed to give them force, the manner in which these resolutions were adopted at the meeting of the Assistant Teachers, might lead you to believe that these difficulties are more extensive than we would have led you to suppose.

It has been no pleasant task for us to offer and defend these views. We reluctantly accepted the work in the interest and at the request of our associates. But the duties assumed, our per-

sonal comfort and security were to us last in the line of importance. We are aware of the influences which have been brought to bear to suppress or disparage our statements, but we have made them in the light of truth, and not of pressure or policy. We have been expostulated with; the security of our official heads has been brought into question; we have been compared with creatures of an intelligence generally supposed to be very limited or altogether absent; our associates have been informed that their interest in these discussions, and their presence here, was neither desired, nor would be allowed. But we have to stand here with the good conscience of having persevered in the performance of a right and a duty, and of having vindicated our title to an honorable independence. It has been intimated that our remarks have fallen flat and unprofitable—that the “flutter” we were promised would arise in the opposition which was declared to be inaugurated “to the end,” had not been witnessed, and that there is, therefore, “nobody hurt.” But the contest with the real enemy has been absent; and those who at first thought to overawe by a vigorous threatening and noise, have, after the fashion of a valorous bird, hidden their faces in the sand, in the easy belief that safety would thereby be secured.

Mr. Chairman, if we have succeeded in securing your respectful attention, we are grateful. And if, as your honored Superintendent has observed, we have “helped to bring facts to bear, in this investigation, which tend strongly to point out the errors of which complaint has been made,” we are amply repaid for our labors. It remains for you, gentlemen, to initiate such reforms as your judgment shall point out as necessary, and to recommend such further enactments as shall secure the thorough performance of your will. Let not your laws be written in the sand, which the first intruding wave may laughingly wipe out, but let them be written so plainly, so thoroughly understood and disseminated, and so vigorously enforced, that it cannot again be said, “It is a law, but not enforced.” Here we leave the subject, thanking you for your patience, and trusting that, through your labors, wisdom, and moderation, shall yet come to hold the bar, and regulate the future progress of our trust.

Mr. WILLIAM J. KENNARD next addressed the Committee, as follows: Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen of the Committee—I know the difficulty under which I labor at this advanced hour of the evening, and although I might address you at considerable length, I shall endeavor to confine myself to a very few remarks, and will be as brief as possible.

The Superintendent—Mr. Kiddle—at the last meeting, asked certain interrogatories as to the number of teachers who composed the bodies that had delegated us to represent them here. I presume there are about forty or forty-five Vice-Principals in the city, and these were all invited to present themselves at our meeting. Of the whole number, I think about twenty-five appeared and participated in the proceedings. That twenty-five adopted the resolutions which we presented to you with entire unanimity—"there was not one dissenting voice," as I have already stated in my remarks at a former meeting of this Committee. I therefore presume that the answer to this interrogatory will satisfy the gentleman that myself and colleague are the duly accredited representatives, before your honorable body, of the Vice Principals of New York. The various abuses of which complaint has been made here, is a subject which we shall not touch upon this evening. We have fully presented these matters before the Committee, and that they will make further modifications of the system is our wish, and, I may say, our expectation. We shall certainly be satisfied to have the requirements somewhat reduced and determined more clearly, and our duties, we believe, will not then be so great that we cannot properly perform them. And let me here say that the Vice-Principals have never come here to complain of having *to work*. We have already told you that we are perfectly willing to give the whole school day, and do all we can within that time. We have done so in the past, and we expect to do so in the future; and we only ask now of you that in the present Course of Studies we may take the time necessary to go over properly what is there laid down. It is said that we can, if we please, take a year, or two years, or more. Now, sir, we cannot keep our scholars; they desire to finish their studies within a certain period, and many of them have to be sent out into the world; and when vacancies occur, new scholars, not advanced as are the older members



of the class, have to be “dovetailed” in among them. And these changes, by the departure of older and the arrival of new scholars, are always going on—it always has been so and always will be. With reference to the remarks of the Superintendent, concerning the upper grades, I desire to say a few words. He presents his reasons for believing that the arguments offered against the system are “fallacious and disingenuous.” Had it not been for these words, I do not think I should have to speak to-night. He says that efforts have been made to magnify the requirements of the teachers of the First Grade into thirteen studies, and he also tells us that we may take a number of years to go through the Course. It is precisely on this question of the number of studies that we take issue. We say distinctly that there are thirteen studies required to be taught to pupils under the present prescribed Course of Studies for the First Grade, as laid down in the Manual of the Board of Education. I will read them again: Reading, Spelling and Definitions, as in the Second Grade. In the Second Grade they are divided, but are put into one section or paragraph in the First Grade. They are, though, in reality, three different studies; for the class reads and is instructed and marked in *that* exercise, so also in spelling, and they subsequently take words which they define, and are also marked for this subject. Henderson’s Test Words are used. Definitions are to be taught also from the Reader. Etymology is then commenced, and the Board provides us with a separate book for that study, and these, you will observe, are four studies. Then we have Mental and Written Arithmetic—five. Geography, oral and descriptive—six. English Grammar—seven. Composition—eight. History of the United States—nine. Astronomy—ten. Oral Instruction—eleven. Penmanship—twelve, and Drawing, with exercises in perspective, will also be required, making thirteen studies in all; and these, divided into the total number of hours devoted to or allowed for study during the week, give us, as I have before stated, one hour and thirty-seven minutes to be devoted to each study in the course of the ordinary school week. And the same objection, we say, applies to the second and first Supplementary Grades. Believing then, that we cannot perform all this work thoroughly, we

say again that we would like you to abolish some of those studies, and so lighten the requirements in a way that will in the end be conducive to the interests of the pupils, who will thus be more thoroughly taught in the studies they undertake. It is said, also, that we ask that two other studies be included, which will enable us to prepare a class for the Introductory Class of the New York College. We ask for no such thing. It was asked by some of the delegates that Book-keeping and Algebra, through Simple Rules and Factoring, might be introduced into the First Grade, should you see fit to abolish or combine in one several of the studies of that grade. This was asked, not with any reference to the College, but that scholars in certain sections of the city, where they cannot advance beyond the First Grade, might go out to business with some knowledge of Book-keeping. The reason for asking the introduction of Algebra, was because the grade above, viz., the Second Supplementary, is required to commence Algebra and finish Quadratics. This we think too great a requirement for one grade, and wished to have the work divided more equitably.

The hour is late, gentlemen, and having made these corrections, we leave this matter in your hands, heartily thanking you for your kind and courteous attention.

Mr. HUGH CARLISLE next addressed the meeting, and said :

Mr. Chairman, I have only a word or two to offer on the subject of Algebra as placed in the Course of Studies, in addition to the remarks just now made. The gentleman who first addressed you this evening, laid considerable stress upon the unpractical character of that study as a reason why it should still be confined, as it is at present, among the studies of a single grade, and not be made to take time in another grade that might better be given to something more useful. As long, however, as the existing requirements continue for admission to the New York College, the comparative value of the study of Algebra, or whether it has any practical utility at all, we have nothing at present to do with. The question is not whether little or much of the science ought to be taught in a Public School, but whether what is required to be taught can be got through with in one class. And it ought to be sufficient to reply that all of Algebra that has ever been required to be taught, is re-

quired to be taught by the present Course of Studies; but it is now all to be done in one grade instead of being distributed, as it used to be, among two or three.

Superintendent KIDDLE said: Were I disposed to make any rejoinder to the remarks made here this evening, certainly the lateness of the hour would forbid it. But, sir, I do not think that it is necessary that I should go into any such formal rejoinder or reply. I have listened carefully to the remarks made, and I must say that I do not think they have at all impaired the argument of the Superintendents, and, therefore, I am willing that all should go on the record together, and that the statements on either side should be fairly and fully considered. I wish, however, to reiterate a remark that I have already made—that is, that I had no intention of making a personal attack upon any one when I addressed your Committee, nor have I made any; and I am willing that the statements of each side, as they appear in print, should each of them be considered. I certainly expected no such exhibition as has been witnessed here to-night.

It has been remarked here also, that the marking system, by numerals, was abolished by the Board of Education, and documents have been presented to show that such was the case. I only wish to say, with reference to it, that such was not the case. The report which was made was accompanied by no resolution, and, therefore, did not bind the Superintendents. This matter came before the Board, and it was referred to a Committee. They had several meetings and discussions regarding it, and afterwards sent the whole matter to the Superintendents and teachers for adjustment. They did make an adjustment of it, which, as my colleague has stated, simply decided that the publicity given to the marks should be abandoned. The Committee based their report upon an *ex parte* statement, since we were never consulted as regarded what that report should be. As it was *ex parte*, we were not bound by its terms, and especially as there was no action of the Board except to sanction the action of the Committee in submitting the matter to the Superintendents and teachers. Having made this explanation, I leave the subject of this investigation in the hands of your Committee.

Commissioner MERRILL (Chairman) then said : If there are any citizens, other than those who have already been heard, who wish to come before the Committee and give their views upon the questions under consideration, if they will so indicate to the Committee, they will have the opportunity of doing so, otherwise the meeting will be considered adjourned.

I have been highly pleased and gratified with the knowledge that has been derived from the views so ably presented here by both sides in the argument, and I have come to the conclusion that whatever the decision of the Committee, after deliberation, may be, a great public benefit will result from the investigation to the hundred thousand children who are placed under our care. The ability which has been displayed here shows conclusively, also, that both the Principals and teachers, and the Superintendents as well, are capable and fully competent to look faithfully to the interests of their departments, and through their departments to the interests of the cause of Public Education generally.

The Committee then adjourned.













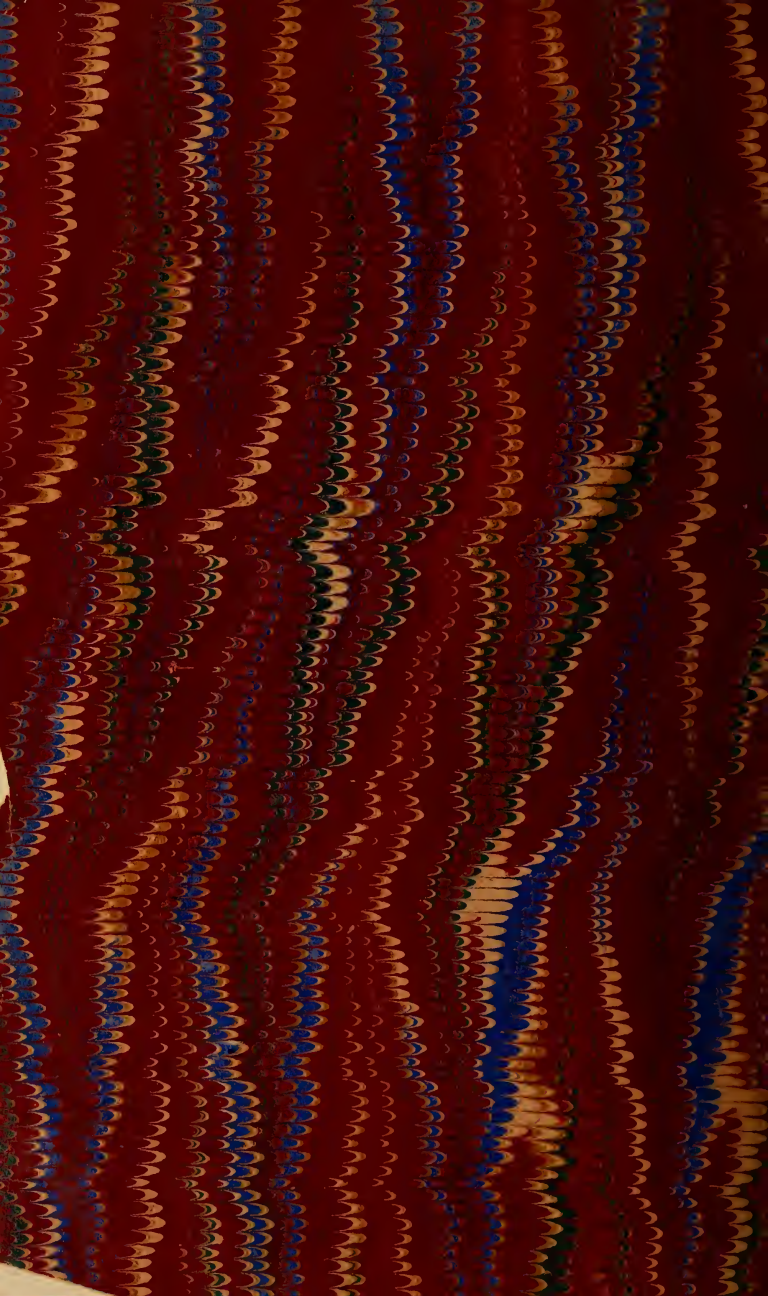








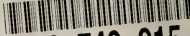








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